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Peter the Great

Books by Stephen Graham

A VAGABOND IN THE CAUCASUS
UNDISCOVERED RUSSIA
A TRAMP'S SKETCHES
CHANGING RUSSIA
WITH THE RUSSIAN PILGRIMS TO JERUSALEM
WITH POOR EMIGRANTS TO AMERICA
RUSSIA AND THE WORLD
THROUGH RUSSIAN CENTRAL ASIA
THE WAY OF MARTHA AND THE WAY OF MARY
RUSSIA IN 1916
THE QUEST OF THE FACE
A PRIVATE IN THE GUARDS
CHILDREN OF THE SLAVES
THE CHALLENGE OF THE DEAD
EUROPE—WHITHER BOUND?
TRAMPING WITH A POET IN THE ROCKIES
IN QUEST OF EL DORADO
LIFE AND LAST WORDS OF WILFRID EWART
RUSSIA IN DIVISION
LONDON NIGHTS
THE GENTLE ART OF TRAMPING
NEW YORK NIGHTS
LIFE OF PETER THE GREAT

Fiction

PRIEST OF THE IDEAL
UNDER-LONDON
MIDSUMMER MUSIC
THE LAY CONFESSOR

Peter I

STEPHEN GRAHAM

PETER THE GREAT

A life of

PETER I OF RUSSIA

called the

GREAT

London

ERNEST BENN LTD.

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I

Michael, the first of the house of Romanof, died of melancholy in his fiftieth year. He was the son of Philaret, Archbishop of Rostof the Great, later Patriarch of Russia. Michael married Eudoxia, the daughter of a poor gentleman farmer who ploughed and sowed his fields himself. But of the children of the marriage only one survived the Tsar, and that was Alexis, who reigned in his stead.

Alexis, who reigned thirty-two years, was also somewhat weak in health, inheriting from his father the disease of which he died. Of his first wife, Marya Miloslava, the daughter of a boyard, he had numerous children, but except for his third daughter Sophia they were dull, puny, given to fits, and they began to die rapidly about him, so that he feared for the future of his line. Therefore, after the death of Marya Miloslava, he bethought him of further safeguarding his dynasty, and he married a young girl full of health and vigour, Natalia Narishkina, who became the mother of Peter the Great.

Natalia Narishkina was a ward in the house of a wealthy and powerful boyard, Matveyef, though she was herself of obscure family and had been fortunate in being placed by her parents under the protection of one who stood so high at Court.

Peter was the fourteenth child of Tsar Alexis, and the only son of Alexis and Natalia. He was born in the Kremlin in Moscow on the 30th May, 1672. He was but four years and some months when his father

died. Alexis died in his forty-eighth year; three of his sons died before him, but there survived Fedor, Ivan, and Peter; the two first from the marriage with Marya Miloslava, and the last from the marriage with Natalia Narishkina. Thus there arose two jealous factions in Moscow, the Miloslavsky and the Narishkiny, and they struggled against one another for power for twelve years.

Artemon Sergeyevitch Matveyef, in whose house Natalia had been brought up, was a man of Western taste. He was married to Mary Hamilton, a Scotchwoman, whose influence upon Natalia caused her to be more independent and free in mind than most ladies of her time. The house was arranged and furnished in German style. Matveyef was a seeker of knowledge, especially Western knowledge, and seeing that Russia languished far behind the rest of Europe in civilisation and culture, strove to make up the default. He was not pious, as was his friend and benefactor Tsar Alexis, who fasted eight months in the year and made a thousand prostrations in a day. He was accused of dabbling in black arts and of having enchanted the Tsar, such accusation being founded on such slender evidence as the importation of a manual on algebra. He was a modern European of his day.

He directed largely the foreign affairs of his country, and being more accessible than his Tsar, was greatly sought by strangers. Matveyef was the first Russian to have fixed reception days for foreign visitors. Travellers from all Western lands were hospitably entertained, and their opinions sought. For Matveyef was sympathetic to the new ideas then surging into Russia. He and his friends, and among them Tsar Alexis himself, talked of many reforms which in later days the young Peter did not talk of but carried out.

Natalia Narishkina, under the influence of Matveyef, brought the new taste to the Palace, and her baby leapt from the cradle to a nursery which was different from any nursery of a Muscovite prince to that day. German toys and models surrounded Peter from the first: every imaginable toy gun of the time, and soldiers and forts, and boats, and a musical box, little choppers, sabres, drums. And as live toys, dwarfs were given him to play with. Artemon Matveyef made him a present of a little gilt carriage drawn by tiny ponies, and when he went out in it two dwarfs went on his right hand and two on his left, while a fifth dwarf rode on a little horse behind him. On the 19th September, 1675, the child rode thus in procession in his carriage to the monastery of Serge-Troitsky. He was then three years old. Boys of his own age, though not all of his lineage, were brought in to play with him, among them some whom he kept with him for the rest of his life. They fought battles, destroyed kingdoms, built cities upon the nursery floor, the infant Peter rehearsing there his whole life and career.

At four and a half years Tsar Alexis died, the Miloslavsky faction fought the friends and kindred of Peter's mother and drove them out. Matveyef was sent to the icy town of Pustozersk, far away in the north, near the Pechora river. Natalia and her child left the Tsaritsa's part of the palace, with its nursery and luxurious infantile diversions, retiring willingly into the background while her stepson Fedor ruled.

But the young Peter remained passionately loyal to the joys of the nursery. In adolescence the "playmates" became "play regiments." His toy armies of tin became toy armies of noble youths, and the toy army which twelve years later overcame the Milo-

slavsky he built into the real army which ruined the great warrior of the north, Charles the Twelfth of Sweden. Did he have toy choppers in the nursery?—he became the man with the axe, hewing with his own hands masts and beams and working as no Tsar had worked before, nay, even chopping off the heads of the condemned and doing headsman's work. Did he have drums and beat upon them, summoning his young companions?—he became the greatest drummer in all Russia, and when he went abroad interrupted orchestras to take over the drums. And as for dwarfs, he searched Russia and Europe for them, and never could have enough.

At five years old a great change in the upbringing of Peter was attempted. Tsar Fedor was not unfriendly toward the stepmother-Tsaritsa and her child as long as they remained quiet and harmless in the background of the Kremlin life. He was Peter's godfather and felt responsible for the education of the child. Now he should be taught his alphabet and instructed in the lives of the saints.

To that end Nikita Zotof was brought to the sad Natalia, who took him by the hand and said, "I know that thou art of good life and versed in the Scriptures, and I deliver to thee my only son." Zotof, who was a great drunkard, and nervous, fell at her feet in tears, protesting that he was unworthy—"Unworthy am I, little mother queen, to take over such a treasure."

Next day the Patriarch in all his grandeur came to bless the opening of the alphabet, and with him came Tsar Fedor. Zotof and his pupil and the books were sprayed with holy water, prayers were said, and the first lesson was begun.

Peter liked Nikita Zotof and in later years made him one of his jesters and gave him the mock title of

" prince-pope " or " Patriarch of Mirth " and president of the college of drink. But the blessing of the Church availed little in the teaching of Peter his letters. For he never did learn to write and spell correctly. But with Zotof he learned to sing Church liturgies and to imitate and make fun of a deacon very well. He did not learn to be pious nor to pray nor to respect traditions.

He turned eagerly from religion and grammar to his picture-books. His good-natured tutor told him stories and recounted history, turning ever and anon to Italian and German woodcuts and engravings, which awakened in Peter an eager curiosity. Such zest did he show for the study of pictures that play-books were made for him composed almost entirely of coloured drawings. Here were pictures of foreign cities, of palaces, of great ships, of battles, of sieges. From these and by his questions the Tsarevitch learned history and fed a young creative mind.

In the summer, when his mother and he went to live at Preobrazhenskoe, three miles from Moscow, it was found that he had already forgotten his letters, but he had not forgotten his old toys, companions, pictures, histories. His greatest interest was in play, and alike at the village and in the capital means were found to encourage him and satisfy him in play. Even the Miloslavsky reflected that a boy who played so much could hardly be a danger to them.

II

It was a strange fate that overtook Matveyef, that he should be deprived of all his culture and banished to that remote town far above the Arctic circle, Pustozersk, where languished in prison the fanatical slave of tradition, the Old Believer martyr, Avvakum, who believed that everything new was wrong. The apostle of the West and of progress met the apostle of the East and of sacred tradition. Both railed against the power that held them in durance, and for some years they were equal in misfortune.

But Matveyef was not a martyr, nor without blame, for when Alexis died he had been guilty of great rashness.

The heir to the throne, then but fourteen and very sick, was Fedor, whom the Tsar upon his death-bed had named and blessed as his successor. Fedor lay prostrate with swollen legs and could not walk, and Artemon Matveyef locked him in his room, led child Peter to the vacant throne and thought fit to proclaim him Tsar.

Peter, barely five years old, just taken from his nursery floor, faced the wondering nobles whom Matveyef had bade enter and make obeisance. His mother stood beside him, ready to prompt him what to do or say. But the boyards would have none of her or him, nor of her protector. They pushed Artemon Matveyef aside, rushed to Fedor's room, broke open the door, and carried the sick boy to the throne.

No one has recorded what Peter said when he

stepped down from the throne, nor what he thought. Did he laugh? Was he angry? It was the last of his Kremlin games.

Matveyef was as fond of Peter as of his own son Andrew, and he left Andrew to play with him at Preobrazhenskoe and did not take him to the far north. There in the pleasant country outside Moscow they played at soldiers again as in the precious apartments of the *terem*. There were fewer toys. Drums, when they were broken, were not replaced but taken for repair. But still Natalia brought them new pistols and toy muskets, toy broadswords, choppers. Still there were dwarfs—in raspberry-coloured cloth coats over white fur with little gold buttons. They had bows and arrows and spears too—there was room to stage new wars with Tartary.

With Peter played Lef Martemian, Fedor Kirilovy, Gavrilo Golovkin, Avtomon Golovin, Andrew Matveyef, Prince Andrew Cherkassky, Prince Vassily Mestschersky, Prince Ivan Golitzin, Prince Ivan Streshnef, and many others whose parents adhered to the cause of Matveyef and the Narishkins.

Preobrazhenskoe, with its miniature Kremlin palace of wood, had been the favourite summer pleasaunce of Alexis and Natalia during their short married life. There they had cast aside the discipline of Court life. Matveyef had caused to be built for them a theatre where they watched clowns and conjurers and jesters and merry-andrews, many of them brought from Western Europe for their diversion. In this theatre mystery-plays were performed, and strange religious pieces with political allusions. The palace and the theatre remained. Amusement of a rougher kind succeeded. For between Preobrazhenskoe and Moscow was the foreign suburb harbouring many strange characters, Germans, Dutchmen, Scotsmen, French-

men, beguiled to Muscovy by craving for fortune and adventure.

In Moscow, though a child of Miloslava ruled, the Miloslavsky family was not firmly set in power. For the young Tsar Fedor made favourites in other families. The power that fell into the hands of Ivan Miloslavsky, a cousin of the Tsar's mother, gradually waned. For the other boyards hated him as an upstart. Fedor's first wife died in childbed, and to defeat the influence of the Miloslavsky they beguiled the Tsar to take as his second wife a godchild of Matveyef.

Directly Fedor saw the beautiful fourteen-year-old Martha Apraxina he fell in love with her, as it were falling in love with death. For the physicians warned him against the marriage-bed. That was in vain; intrigue and desire had their way, and within ten weeks of the new union Fedor died.

Martha Apraxina, before she would consent to marry Fedor, had obtained State pardon and restitution for her godfather Artemon Matveyef. Messengers were sent to the far north to bid the old man return homeward as far as Lukh in the province of Kostroma, there to await a further decree of the Tsar.

Natalia and Peter also returned to Moscow, and Peter had a playground made for him on the open ground within the Kremlin, and toy cannon that fired wooden balls sewn up in leather were given him for his diversion.

Fedor died without naming a successor. Ivan would have been his choice, but that Ivan was of feeble mind, tongue-tied, and nearly blind. The nobles did not want a weakling, nor a return of the power of the hated faction. Most of them wished to name Peter as Tsar, though he was but ten years old.

Then Fedor lay in state, and everyone in Moscow came to the bier and, having kissed the face of the dead Tsar, kissed also the hands of his two brothers, Peter and Ivan. And the Patriarch came out to the mourners and said, " Which of these two will ye have for Tsar? " They answered that not they alone should speak, but that all ranks in Muscovy should have their voice.

Thereupon the Patriarch bade all assemble on the square in front of the church of the Saviour, and he put his question again—which of the two Tsarevitchs should be Tsar? Voices on all hands cried out for Peter, and those who called for Ivan were barely heard. So the Patriarch returned to the palace and gave Peter the Church's blessing for the throne.

At this the six sisters of Ivan were greatly grieved, though none more than Sophia, the strongest of them, the only healthy child of the first marriage of Alexis.

Sophia Alexeèvna detested her stepmother personally, and detested her as a rival in power, calling her the she-bear who had come from nowhere to make her lair in the Kremlin.

Sophia was headstrong and ambitious, capable of statecraft and intrigue, defiant of convention. Women had little power in Russia; they languished in Oriental duress, as if the yoke of Tartar and Mussulman had not been lifted off the land. It is said that Natalia broke many of the locks of the *terem ;* but Sophia profited by the example to break more, dreaming even of becoming herself autocrat of Russia in her own right.

A cloistered and religious life had been the traditional lot of daughters of a Tsar. They seldom married, or came into the open, or showed themselves to the people. But at her brother's funeral Sophia

broke with convention and followed the hearse, moaning, and making public demonstration of her grief.

The cathedral was packed with Miloslavsky. The burial service was long, and before the end of it Natalia took Peter home to the Palace. Peter was restless and longed to eat. Natalia's brother, Ivan Narishkin, just returned from banishment, said the dead could bury the dead. This was a scandal to those who remained, and they whispered to one another: "What sort of kindred are they who cannot wait to the end of the funeral?"

Sophia came out of the cathedral exalted with grief and with rage, and, making great lamentation, said to the people, "Behold our brother, our Tsar Fedor, has gone from this world suddenly, poisoned by wicked enemies! Have pity on us orphans; we have neither father now, nor mother, nor is our elder brother Ivan chosen to be Tsar. If there be blame upon us in your eyes or in the eyes of the boyards, let us go freely into exile to a foreign land and to some Christian King!"

Having thus stirred up the people, she turned to the Strieltsi, the Moscow garrison infantry, who with their wives and families lived in the suburbs all around the city. The lower ranks were discontented with their colonels, who had been withholding a great part of their wages. Their commander, Dolgoruky, was old and feeble, and his son, who shared authority, lacked character and will. A mutiny began with the demand that nine colonels be arrested and forced to pay the debt, and the threat that in case of refusal the houses of the colonels would be plundered. Natalia put the colonels under arrest and promised to bring them to Court. That was not enough. The soldiery became so threatening that the Tsaritsa gave way still

further and was even ready to deliver the arrested colonels into the power of the mutineers for popular vengeance. The Patriarch alone understood how dangerous such weakness was, and sent monks to all the regiments to argue with the malcontents and endeavour to pacify them. The colonels had to pay up. Some, it is said, were cudgelled first. The soldiers were mollified by seeing Colonels Karandeyef and Griboyedof receive the knout.

The soldiers read the colonels a lesson—literally. For before the punishment was carried out they addressed them thus—

> "We obeyed ye humbly; ye fined us, ye insulted us, ye cramped us, beat us to work, abused us. Ye used our allotments for growing vegetables which we must buy back from ye. Ye made us work, ye made our children work for ye in the country. Ye made us sew for you coloured clothing, velvet caps, yellow boots. Ye stole our wages and rations. . . ."

The spectacle of flogging was a brutal pleasure in those days. What Peter thought of the whipping of the colonels is not recorded, but he feared the power of the Strieltsi, and instinctively planned to build an army of his own. Peter was at that time a very gentle, affectionate boy who had a little outgrown his strength. Cruelty did not then appear in his constitution. It was many years before he began to take personal pleasure in the use of the knout.

The flogging of the colonels did not appease the mutineers, who continued to gather daily in threatening crowds. Sophia and her faction used the opportunity well, promising all manner of benefits to the mutineers if the Tsaritsa Natalia were overthrown.

It was unfortunate that Matveyef was so long in

returning to Moscow. It was the 27th April when Alexis died.[1] It was the evening of the 12th May when Matveyef got to Moscow. But an old man could not go faster.

The joy of his meeting with Peter and Natalia passed words. The Patriarch also was profoundly glad that he had come, and remained closeted with him for a long while, informing him of the situation. Matveyef had a wonderful reception. All disloyalty hid itself. Even representatives of the regiments brought him bread and salt—and petitions. He knew how to flatter and caress and win popularity. It looked as if at once all power would be in his hands. He had a perfect red sky at morning. But in the background lurked the menacing cloud of Sophia and her conspirators—Khovansky, Ivan and Alexander Miloslavsky, Odintsef, Petrof, Tolstoy, Tsikler, Ozerovy.

Early in the morning of the 15th May Tolstoy and Alexander Miloslavsky galloped round the soldiers' settlements, crying that the Tsarevitch Ivan had been strangled in the Kremlin, and calling on the men to avenge themselves on the usurpers.

Then with spears and axes and carbines and cannon and streaming banners the Strieltsi surged across Moscow and forced their way into the Kremlin, striking down all those who stood before them.

To meet their wrath the Patriarch and Natalia led out upon the grand staircase of the palace the Tsar Peter and his brother Ivan, causing the revolutionaries to pause in doubt, since Ivan, who was supposed to have been strangled, stood in the flesh before them, attesting that none had done him injury and that he had plaint against none.

Then the leaders of the insurrection cried out that

[1] 27th April, 1682.

Ivan Narishkin, the Tsaritsa's young brother, he who said the dead might bury their dead, had had his head measured for the crown, and they demanded that he and old Matveyef be delivered to them. Matveyef came out and argued with the men, and might have won them over had not the senile commander Dolgoruky thought fit to harangue his men like dogs and bid them begone out of the Kremlin. The Strieltsi had long since mocked his authority, but his abusive words reminded them of all their grievances. The old man for his pains was seized by the mob and thrown from the balcony where he was speaking on to a sea of upthrust spears.

Matveyef had been standing with one arm around Peter, to show how close he was to the Tsar and that what promises he made he would be able to fulfil. But that availed naught. The old man was snatched away into the midst of the crowd, and with yells of triumph the armed mob cut him to pieces with their axes. That happened outside the gates of the cathedral of the Annunciation. Matveyef was no more, and the day was lost.

Natalia snatched her son to her and fled, and her faction fled with her, hiding themselves where they could within the palace. The mob ransacked the palace. They killed Soltikof, thinking him to be Afanasy Narishkin. A dwarf betrayed the hiding-place of Afanasy, and they took him from under the altar of the church of the Resurrection and hacked off his arms and his legs. They searched and found Ivan Fomitch Narishkin and killed him. They cut Yazikof in pieces; they killed Prince Gregory Romodanovsky, and many others.

But the brother who was reputed to have measured himself for the crown still lived, and was in hiding with young Andrew Matveyef, the son, Peter's play-

mate. All the next day the insurrectionaries clamoured for the life of Ivan Narishkin. He was only twenty-three years of age, but Sophia hated him and he stood in her path in her quest of power.

Khovansky led the mob, suggesting not only the destruction of the remaining boyards, but the expulsion of the Tsaritsa Natalia from the Kremlin. It was proclaimed that if the hiding-place of Ivan Narishkin were not made known everyone in the Kremlin who was of the Miloslavsky persuasion should perish.

The nobles pleaded with Natalia with tears in their eyes that she betray her brother and save their lives. So Ivan was brought out from behind the golden gates of the cathedral of the Saviour where he had been hiding and sacrificed by his friends. But before they delivered him to be slaughtered Natalia insisted upon benefit of clergy and the rites of the Church. He was confessed; he received the holy Elements and the holy Oil. An ikon of the Blessed Virgin was put in his hands, and he should go to his tormentors holding it up before him.

One of the nobles, more cowardly than the rest, Prince Odoevsky, pressed Natalia to hurry, lest through her delay all should perish.

The mob led Ivan Narishkin away, and he was put to the torture in order that he might confess something which would justify the rising. But the brave young man was silent under pain. He had not conspired against the throne, nor measured himself for the crown, nor would he say so, even in extremity. The mob lost patience with him in his silence, and they took him to the Red Square and hewed him to bits.[1]

Next day the soldiers' deputies demanded that

[1] 17th May.

Natalia's father, Kiril, shave his head and take the vows of monkhood, which he at once did.[1] Kiril became Father Cyprian, being sent to the monastery of Bielozersk, four hundred miles due north of Moscow.

Next day again the deputies came and demanded back pay to the amount of two hundred and forty thousand roubles, and ten roubles per man.[2] The silver vessels of the palace were melted down to coin money for them.

Then they demanded the estates of the nobles they had slain.

On the 20th May they presented a list of nobles that they wished to see banished to distant parts; but the riotous behaviour of the troops had now ceased and there was little to fear from them. Nevertheless the lands were confiscated and the nobles banished.

Sophia entered the palace and began to rule, though Peter remained Tsar. Petitions were soon heard that the simple tongue-tied brother Ivan be raised to the throne in Peter's place. Sophia bore no malice against Peter, for she could manage any boy of ten years. But for her support as Regent she needed Ivan.

The nobles and personages were called together, and in terror of their lives and property gave their voice for Ivan as Tsar on an equality with Peter. The Patriarch also thought this the wisest course. The bell of Ivan the Great sounded over Moscow. Ivan and Peter were proclaimed Tsars, Ivan being named first. Solemn Mass was held in the cathedral of the Assumption. The supreme power was vested in Sophia as Regent. She at once made her lover, Basil Golitsin, her chief vizier. The soldiers were allowed to feed in the palace kitchens, two regiments a day in turn. The deputies caused an obelisk to be put up in

[1] 18th May. [2] 19th May.

the Red Square, commemorating the rebellion and justifying the cause.

And Sophia had a double silver throne made for Ivan and Peter, with a prompting door at the back, so that when they sat there side by side, holding Court and receiving petitions, she could tell them what to do and what to say. Sophia's face appeared on the coins and her name as signature to all decrees. She had what she desired, and was now for a space woman autocrat of all the Russias.

III

The turbulent Moscow garrison understood itself as the defence of the dynasty. It had no thought of establishing a Government of its own. And the ringleaders of revolt knew that the garrison could not withstand the armies of the rest of Russia should they be brought into the field against it.

But the spirit of revolt, once aroused, was not soon quelled. The Strieltsi became as great a menace to Sophia as they had been her help. Demands impossible to meet were made of her, and her life and that of the two Tsars were menaced.

Furthermore, the revolt took a religious bias, and became popularly regarded as a struggle against reforms and new ideas, especially within the Church. Now men should be allowed to worship according to the old rites; the printed liturgies should be burned; two fingers instead of three should be used in blessing. It should be fashionable to have a beard. Tobacco should be proscribed. The faithful languishing in remote prisons and monasteries should be free to return to the centre; the martyrs of the old faith canonised.

And Sophia, like Natalia, cared little for these things, which were nevertheless impossible to concede. Ivan said nothing that was intelligible, and Peter, if he thought about affairs, saw tradition associated with the hateful force that had destroyed his mother's kindred and her dearest friends.

Prince Khovansky, now commander of the Strieltsi

in the place of Dolgoruky, was a fervent Old Believer, and he promised the sectarians of the garrison that the two Tsars should be crowned according to the old rites, and that there should be seven sacramental loaves baked by the Old Believers themselves, and that an old cross should be used.

A certain widow possessed of sacred lore baked the coronation loaves according to tradition, and they were entrusted to the monk Nikita to carry to the cathedral. But so great was the press of people on the morning of the coronation that Nikita was unable to enter at the door, and he returned to his brethren without having accomplished what he set out to do. Ivan and Peter were communicated with more ordinary bread and the Cross used had no foot-rest.[1]

And although the Patriarch Joachim had seemed to favour the cause of the Tsaritsa and of Peter rather than of Sophia and of Ivan, yet the Miloslavsky were not willing that he should be overthrown. The Patriarch was wise, gentle, and firm, and he inspired great respect. Even the hot-headed Prince Khovansky, demanding reversion to the old rites, became as a small child in his presence. In Joachim the Old Believers encountered a resistance kindred to the will of God.

Nevertheless the rumour went abroad that the persecution was over and that the golden age would return. The fanatics of the old faith swarmed into the city from the forests and the marshes, coming even from the remote refuges of the north. In their old cloaks and long beards and with bodies wasted by fasting or eaten by corroding iron, with ancient hoods pulled down over their brows, they argued and disputed at the street-corners, telling the story of their

[1] 25th June.

torments and of the glory of hundreds of martyrs who had suffered death by fire for the sake of true tradition.

Thus a great popular religious ferment grew out of the mutiny of the soldiery and out of the establishment of the elder Tsarevitch upon the throne. The rights of the elder being affirmed, all old men became assured of the authority of their years and recollections. Many of the garrison who had been indifferent became converted to the cause of the old faith. Some forgot that they had fought for wages and lost privileges, and believed that they had fought for their religion.

Thus Prince Khovansky, assured of a great force behind him, became more bold in his designs. Disloyal, treacherous, headstrong, ambitious, he became a greater danger to Sophia than any of the Miloslavsky. But though he dissembled before her he did not deceive her; and though he browbeat her he could not tame her. She was cleverer than he, and removed herself out of his power in time, together with the two Tsars, and set up Court at some small distance from the city in the village of Kolomenskoe.[1] Prince Khovansky rashly followed her with his intrigues and deceits. He knew that in time all Russia would rally round her and that the Strieltsi would be crushed, and he strove to beguile her and the young monarchs back to the Kremlin.

Sophia bided her time, frequently changing the habitat of the Court and going from village to village, so that the Strieltsi seldom knew with certainty where the young Tsars were. Sophia, possessing like a she-wolf both fear and ferocity, turned tail, but turned again to show fangs. Khovansky learned too late with whom he was playing. Suddenly, on Sophia's

[1] 23rd August.

name-day, day of lighted candles, dedicatory services and feasting,[1] Sophia sprang upon her enemy and destroyed him.

The Court was then at Vozdvizhenskoe, within a short riding distance of the sacred fortress of Serge-Troitsky monastery, safe refuge of kings. Sophia was supported by several regiments and an increasing number of country gentry and nobles. She invited Khovansky and his sons to discuss some small difficulty that had arisen. In the meantime she dictated the accusation against him that he was conspiring against the throne and the faith. Khovansky and his sons were arrested on the highway; the accusation was read to them and following it the sentence of death. The old man pleaded with tears in his eyes for his sons and for himself, and even prevailed upon his capturer to return to Sophia for further instructions.

But Sophia, hardly pausing in the festivity of the day, cried out impatiently: "Execute them without delay!" And the great leader of the Old Believers and his son Andrew were beheaded by a common soldier upon the highroad even at the gates of the city of Moscow.

One escaped, that was the other son Ivan, who rushed to the Kremlin to call the soldiery to vengeance. Such a hubbub of rage was aroused that Sophia thought it wise to remove herself and the two boys to the safety of the monastery.

Serge-Troitsky monastery, twenty miles from Moscow, was in those days fortified and capable of withstanding a siege, but it was also so holy a place that it would have been impossible to lead a Russian army against it. It had been burned by Lithuanians and Tartars in 1408 and then rebuilt solidly in stone.

[1] 17th September.

When, two hundred years later, the Poles led thirty thousand men against it, it was found to be almost irreducible. It might therefore be considered to be the safest refuge in all Russia.

But the rage of the Strieltsi died down as rapidly as it had arisen. The death of Khovansky was a relief to them. They wished to live peacefully with their wives and families again. They were frightened by the increasing forces mobilising at Troitsky. Rumour magnified the strength of Sophia, and Ivan Khovansky was incapable of inspiring or leading them. They lost patience with the Old Believers. They apprehended great punishment and longed for the security of the monarchs enthroned once more in the Kremlin, that they might understand themselves again as the only protectors of the dynasty. They sent deputies to Sophia offering to submit. They made their peace with the Patriarch.

On the 8th of October the Patriarch held Mass in the cathedral of the Assumption, which was packed to the doors with the Strieltsi. After Mass there were placed upon the two ambos the Gospel and the right hand of the Apostle Andrew, and one by one the soldiers kissed the Gospel and the hand and made a verbal promise of goodwill.

Then Ivan Khovansky was bound and sent to Troitsky for justice, and Sophia concluded a pact with the insurgents, and they agreed to destroy the obelisk which had been erected in the Red Square to commemorate the mutiny of the 15th of May, and the column with its inscriptions was laid low, having stood but six months, and the Strieltsi acknowledged that all that they had done was evil.

After that, Sophia deemed that it was both wise and prudent to return to Moscow,[1] and with her

[1] 6th November.

retainers, horsemen, monks, ikon-bearers and banners rode out from the monastery, and with never-ceasing acclamation brought the dumb Ivan and the tall, handsome Peter to Moscow, the bells of hundreds of churches clashing out the joy of restoration.

IV

Meanwhile Natalia had been living quietly at Preobrazhenskoe, and directly it was safe Peter left his shared throne in Moscow to join his mother there. His heart was in his games, which had been completely interrupted by the six months terror. Sophia had no objection to the removal. Indeed, Peter somewhat anticipated her desire.

Natalia proved to be a more timid character than her step-daughter, and allowed herself to be completely retired from Court, without even access to the Treasury. Although Tsaritsa of Russia, she was so poor that she was obliged to borrow money from the Abbot of Troitsky monastery and from the Metropolitan of Rostof. The once-luxurious residence of Alexis at Preobrazhenskoe was in a shabby condition. Natalia gossiped and complained, but was incapable of leadership, organisation, or intrigue. Nothing further was accomplished in the education of Peter. He was let loose in the back-yard and the village streets to do what he liked.

There were noble occupations for a boy of his years. Thousands of falcons languished on their perches, but Peter spurned falconry, and anyone might take away a falcon who wished. There were stables with many horses. Youth desired to hunt. Not so Peter. It was with the greatest difficulty he could be beguiled to the chase. One day Peter, much harassed by invitations to hunt, agreed, but only on condition that the young nobles themselves should take charge

of the hounds without any aid from the peasants, the first practical joke that the Tsar is recorded to have played on his friends. Of course, the young bloods made a terrible muddle of it, could not hold in the hounds, who frightened the horses and upset nearly every horseman. The hunt caused Peter great mirth, and his friends said to him afterwards: "You were right. The proper occupation of a Tsar is war. Hunting is for the common people."

Peter then took up soldiering seriously, drilled his young friends and the falconers and the grooms and any youths he could find into regiments, constantly riding to Moscow to get equipment. He was Tsar; he would not sit on the throne, but if he wanted to take anything from the arsenal or the palace no one could say him nay. He put guns and ammunition on his carts; he had cannon hauled away; he took tools and maps.

In the foreign suburb he found his first German helper. This was Zommer the artillerist, and he took him to Preobrazhenskoe as instructor. For his wooden cannon had been burned up now, and he had real cannon to play with. Zommer understood very well how to make and fire grenades. In bombs Peter took a delight which lasted all his life. He greatly astonished the Court next year at Pentecost, when, after riding in the religious procession through the city, he gave a display of bombing and cannon-firing on the open ground of the Kremlin.

Peter was not content to watch anything done, but must do it himself, and if he wished in an unroyal way to use his hands there was no authority to interfere with him. Sister Sophia jested at his expense, but Peter was not sensitive to ridicule. Already he laughed greatly at others and did not seem to mind who laughed at him. He helped in the woods to fell the

trees to build his camp. The axe delighted him. He helped to lever the logs into position in the cabin walls. He used every tool that he could find.

In Zommer's opinion Russia was behind the times. It must have been on Zommer's advice that Peter ransacked the Patriarch's library, seeking books which were not there, books on military science and mechanics.[1] The great library was in complete disorder. Peter showed himself as very angry, and went away saying not a word. The Patriarch, to remedy the fault and gratify the Tsar, appointed Zotof librarian and asked him to catalogue the books.

Peter procured for himself the dark green uniform of a German soldier, and in this drilled as drummer-boy, then as infantry-man, then as corporal, then as sergeant drilled those he had drilled with, then as officer directed the sergeants. His mind became entirely occupied with the Preobrazhenskoe camp, and affairs of State seemingly affected him not a whit.

Sophia ruled the land and, still scheming, married Ivan to Prascovia Soltikiva, cousin of the Prince Soltikof,[2] who on the 15th of May the Strieltsi had killed in error, mistaking him for a Narishkin. In due course Ivan begot several children. Sophia did not marry her Chancellor, Basil Golitsin, for he was already married. If there was union it was barren. So Sophia staked her hope for the future upon the continued life of Ivan and his progeny. Ambitious as the Tsarevna was, she was so more for her branch of the family, the Miloslavsky, than for herself as an individual.

The Strieltsi, who had now been given a firm commander in the person of Fedor Shaklovity, never-

[1] 1st June. [2] 9th January.

theless still caused a great deal of trouble. Mutinies and brutal incidents, clamorous demands, arrests, executions, marked the first two years of Sophia's regency. The spirit of revolt spread into the country, especially into the south among the Cossacks. The rumour was also carried to Poland and Turkey and Western Europe that Russia was in a state of revolution. Both in foreign and internal policy the task of Sophia and her chief adviser was exceedingly difficult.

The strong will of Peter's step-sister and her gift for decisive action at the right moment served Russia well when both monarchs were incapable of government, the one being too young and the other too stupid.

V

THERE were so many grooms in Peter's little army that Sophia derided his two battalions as the Preobrazhensky stablemen. One of the stable-boys was Alexander Menshikof, of whom it was said he was of the very lowest breed. But Peter was on as good terms with these youths of the lowest breed as he was with nobles. Their freedom of speech and rough ways were to his liking. Menshikof became one of his favourites and a life-long friend.

That he began to drink vodka and share in obscene jests and became coarse in his personal habits was natural. There were two Peters, one who sat on the silver throne with Ivan, clad in a coat of silver embroidered with red and white flowers and holding a long golden staff in his right hand, the other in a stained green tunic and knee-boots, with dirty hands already hardened by manual labour; one who could exchange polite words with the Swedish ambassador as to the health of his sovereign, the other who could exchange an oath or an obscene expression with fellow workman or soldier.

The boy's conventional education made no progress, but he had started his own polytechnic. He had a carpenter's bench brought to Preobrazhenskoe, and took instruction in carpentry. Mason's tools were procured, and he learned masonry. A forge was set up, and he learned to be a smith. He searched Moscow for instruments and machinery, and what he found he had purchased by the State and sent to the

country. Any foreigner who knew any craft over and above that of the Russian workman was preferred in the camp, which grew daily in its population and activity.

Together with his young companions and foreign helpers he built a fortress on the banks of the River Yauza. He was then only thirteen years of age, though he was thought by some who saw him to be much older, eighteen at least. Manly occupation had hastened manhood.

In his quest of mechanical novelties he obtained a sextant which no one in all Russia, not even the foreigners, knew how to use. He heard of the instrument from the Russian ambassador just setting off for France, and he bade him buy one there. Then, as no one knew how to use it, he sent one of his foreign helpers, Dr. Van der Hulst, to Western Europe to find someone who could. The Dutch merchant, Franz Timmerman, then arrived at the village, showed Peter how to measure distances with the new toy, taught him the elements of surveying, and afresh, simple arithmetic.

Peter had been a dull boy with Zotof; he was very eager with Timmerman and voluntarily went to school again. Timmerman knew no Russian, but Peter struggled through mathematics in broken Dutch. Timmerman himself was not much of a mathematician, for, as appears by the exercise-books still preserved, he made mistakes in simple multiplication.

Investigating anew with Timmerman the junk in his kingdom, Peter came upon a derelict sailing vessel which had come from England a century before, perhaps a gift from Queen Elizabeth to Ivan the Terrible. This was treasure trove. It fired the young Tsar's imagination, and in later years he called that boat the "grandfather of the Russian fleet."

Boats he had already made on the banks of the Yauza, even boats with masts and sails. But here was a boat with several sails, and Timmerman explained how one could tack and beat to windward, sailing against a breeze. He found another Dutchman in the suburb capable of repairing and sailing the ship. Peter was soon into this boat, and he found thereby a new diversion and employment. Using this boat as a model, he determined to build a new one, and with two Dutchmen and some peasant workmen set to work on this. This enterprise took place on the shore of Lake Pleshtcheyef near the town of Pereslavl, fifty miles due north of Moscow, the furthest away from the Kremlin Peter had yet been. There, with Brand and Kort, the two Dutch shipbuilders, he made a wharf. The lake to his eyes was magnificent; he had never seen such an expanse of water before. It must be like the oceans of which the foreigners spoke so much.

The extent of Peter's happiness on the lake was very great. He was more free than at Preobrazhenskoe, and was no longer forced to listen to gossip and cloud his young mind with an understanding of Court intrigue. He remained on the lake for the whole of the summer, and when at last the call of his mother and of the throne could not be any longer refused, he charged the Dutchmen to have ships for him by the spring.

The Narishkins thought of having Peter married. The Tsar was sixteen years of age; it was time. And Ivan's wife, Prascovia, was with child. Perhaps an heir would be born. This apprehension in the mind of the Narishkini caused Natalia to seek a bride for Peter. An heir on the one side ought to be balanced by an heir on the other.

It did not please the Narishkin faction that Peter

showed so little interest in affairs of State. His games and trades and soldiers were to them childish toys. They wished he would use his popularity to gain power. How shall we make a man of this Peter? was the question they asked.

Marriage, they thought, would awaken responsibility and dignity. "When a man marries, he alters," was a saying, and in the hope of altering him Natalia chose the full-faced and ample Eudoxia, a good-looking girl of noble family. Peter was extremely affectionate and submissive to his mother, and opposed nothing against the idea of marriage. When he came back from shipbuilding on the lake, the newest diversion offered to him was getting married.[1] He obeyed his mother, and the project was not uninteresting, rather like some new branch of practical mechanics.

If later he was somewhat more than cold to Eudoxia Lopukhina it must be remembered that he did not choose her. She was convent-bred. She was very unlike the girls of the taverns in the foreign suburb, the jolly accompaniment of eating, drinking, and song. On the other hand, she had not any interest in carpentry or ships, and she combined being modest and conventional with being unintelligent and empty-headed. Peter was not precocious. The violent lusts of after-years had not appeared. He was still stridently childish. But an impulsive vital youth was likely to have a taste of his own, as afterwards became manifest.

Peter disappointed expectation. Barely was the wedding accomplished than he deserted the Kremlin and his young consort and ran back to his bachelor companions at Preobrazhenskoe. His imagination was wholly held by the work going on at Pereslavl and

[1] 20th January.

on the lake. He was becoming fantastically fond of the Dutchmen, and longed to be with them.

He broke bounds and rode on to the lake.[1] On the day he arrived the ice melted, and great was his joy to see the two boats on the water and one larger one on the stocks. He wrote the most endearing letter to his mother, telling her that her "sonnikin Petrushka" was back to work and asking for her blessing and some coils of rope, but saying not a word of his abandoned Dunka. "Wifey Dunka" wrote to him, but he did not answer.

Sophia was not a little pleased at his flight from the Kremlin and his bride, for she had regarded the marriage without encouragement. Perhaps also Natalia looked on Peter's escapade indulgently; the new mother-in-law, without the slightest reason, was a little jealous of Dunka. But the marriage had been consummated, and next year the unfortunate Alexis was born.

[1] 20th April.

VI

PETER became acquainted with General Patrick Gordon, Jacobite, Catholic, and soldier of fortune, celebrating the birthday of his monarch James the Seventh with immense potations in the foreign suburb. To keep a king's birthday at such a distance and with such good cheer seemed a pleasant trait. Peter made contact with the Scotsman by borrowing his soldiers, eventually taking over all his drummers and fifers. Sophia and Prince Golitsin viewed the soldier-borrowing with disfavour.

Gordon was by no means beholden to the "female self-upholder" of all the Russias. He had seen enough of Russia and done enough soldiering for her, having served in the army more than twenty-five years. He had wanted to go home to Scotland for a long time, but was being detained against his will. In 1686 he was allowed leave, but his wife and family were held as hostages against his return. Now, although he had come back holding a personal letter from James to the Tsars, the Muscovites still retained him.

This was the King's letter:

> "James the Seventh, by the Grace of God, King of Scotland, England, France, and Ireland, Defender of the Faith, etc. to the most heigh, most potent, and most serene, our most dear brothers, the Great Lords, Czaars and Great Dukes, Ivan Alexeowich, Peter Alexeowich, of

all the Greater, Lesser, and White Russia Self Upholders, Czaars of Moscovia, Kiovia, Volodomiria, Novogardia, Czaars of Casan, Czaars of Astrachan, Czaars of Siberia, Lords of Plesko, and Grand Dukes of Smollensko, Tweria, Ugoria, Permia, Vatkia, Bolgaria, and others, Lords and Great Dukes of Novogardia, of the Lower Countreyes, of Czernichow, Rezan, Rostow, Yaroslaw, Beloozersky, Adorsky, Obdorsky, Condinsky, and Commanders of all the Northern Coasts, Lords of the lands of Tveria and Grudzinia, Czaars of the lands of Cabardinia, Czirkassia, and Dukes of the Mountaines, and of many other dominions and countreyes, east, west, and north, from father and grandfather theirs, Lords and Conquerours; sendeth greeting, and wisheth all happiness and prosperity. Whereas wee are informed that our trusty and well-beloved subject, Patrick Gordon, hath served your Imperiall Majesties many years, and now serveth in the quality of Lievtennant Generall; who now, by the decease of his father, is to inherit lands, for which he is to perform personal service unto us; and wee having use for the service of such of our subjects as have been bred up in military employments, wee do, therfor, desire of your Imperial Majesties that ye would dismiss the said Patrick Gordon, with his wyfe, children family, and affects, out of your dominions . . .

"JAMES R."

This missive, with its many absurd misspelt titles, was entrusted to a Dutch interpreter to explain to the Court. But as he knew little English it made little impression. The Russians seemed pleasantly surprised to see Gordon back, and Sophia said to him as

he kissed her hand, " May God reward thee for keeping thy word."

Instead of sending him back to Scotland they sent him on a new campaign. He became Quartermaster-General to Golitsin in the attack made upon the Tartars of the Crimea in 1687. The Russians were defeated, but returned to receive congratulations for having won. Many fireworks were let off, and they interested Peter more than the alleged victory. It was not the sort of victory that Peter would have wished to win. But his interest still lay in toys rather than in realities, in sham fights rather than in battles. He did not show any desire to accompany Gordon to the front.

The campaign was renewed with further disaster and fresh laurels for supposed victors. But this time Peter flew into a rage and said blankly that the victory was a defeat.[1] He refused to receive Golitsin or the officers of the Army.

Natalia had called Peter back from the lake in June. The Tsar's mother felt that young as he was he must now face the Moscow intrigue or lose his heritage. Her kinsmen talked to Peter seriously and revealed to his mind the intolerable pretensions of Sophia. Peter began to visit the Kremlin more often and insist on his own. He began to oppose his will to that of his sister.

Peter was taller than any noble at the Court. He attracted great attention, and it was difficult to gainsay him. Ivan was more torpid than ever. Sophia had ceased to be a brilliant young woman, and was an old maid, exaggerated in her pretensions, apt to be violent, a little stupid. She warned the Strieltsi that they might have to fight the Preobrazhensky stable-boys.

[1] 24th July.

On the 6th of August Gordon noted that there were "rumours unsafe to be uttered." He was not a partisan. Gordon wanted to be on the winning side, that is, he did not wish to have his head cut off for being on the side of the losers. Since William of Orange had come to rule over his country he was perhaps less eager to return home. But if he still wished to go home there was more hope in Peter than in Sophia.

It may have been at his suggestion that someone gave warning of danger to Peter. On the 7th August the Strieltsi were mobilised. They were to march to Preobrazhenskoe and destroy the young Tsar. It was midnight, and Peter was sleeping when the secret warning was brought to him. He knew his danger and stayed not to question, but sprang from his bed, did not stop even to put on his clothes, but in long white nightdress ran to his stables and took the first horse and rode for his life—to the forest, to the monastery, to Serge Troitsky.

It was a false alarm. The Strieltsi were not marching on Preobrazhenskoe. They were mobilised, it is true, and did not themselves know for what reason. Some said to be escort to Sophia, some to make an attack, some to sit on the defensive. Shaklovity, their commander, had a chat with Sophia that night and then slept in the palace; Golitsin stayed quietly at home. The female self-upholder was undecided what to do.

But she had done something which proved fatal to her plans: she had frightened Peter, she had caused him to take refuge in that same monastery of Troitsa which had afforded her such complete protection seven years before.

VII

Sophia had got into the habit of going on foot from church to church in Moscow saying a prayer here and a prayer there. She doted upon Golitsin, her joy and the light of her eyes, and lived for his embraces. Now and then she caused a recalcitrant *strielets* to have his nose cut off or his ears sliced. She had not contrived to make herself popular with the Strieltsi. And she had not won over the Patriarch to her side. Yet she dreamed of having herself crowned as unique ruler—at least, so the rumour went. Her position was not strong enough to withstand challenge.

And the flight of Peter was a challenge. His retreat was an advance. He was immeasurably more dangerous at Troitsky monastery than on the playing fields of Preobrazhenskoe. His taking refuge had raised his personal flag as Tsar, and if all Russia rallied to him, Sophia had no course but to abdicate.

Much has been made of the fear of Peter. It was not fear from which he suffered, but terror. When he arrived at the monastery he broke down utterly and wept like a child; he was in convulsions; he could not control the muscles of his face. In short, he had a fit. Over-excitement, terror and exhaustion—he had ridden all night—had their way on his high-strung nature. From that night facial convulsions became habitual in Peter.

He was still too young to hold the Tsardom with his own hands and to stand for his own, but his actions were sagacious. It is better to flee in one's shirt than

to be murdered in bed—and of all places to flee to he chose the best.

Some might laugh at the boy Tsar fleeing in his nightdress, but in the Kremlin the news of Peter's flight caused more consternation than mirth. Every soldier of the garrison began to nod his head wisely. Secret messages were sent to Peter by those who foresaw which way things would go. Colonel Tsikler suggested that Peter ask for him to be sent with fifty soldiers as a personal guard. And having rested, Peter wrote to Sophia and his brother Ivan demanding an explanation of the mobilisation of the Strieltsi, and asking, as suggested, for Tsikler and fifty men. Peter began to treat Sophia as she had treated Khovansky.

Sophia told the Strieltsi plainly that if any showed signs of going over to Peter they would be beheaded. She was obliged to let Tsikler and his men depart, but when Peter went further and asked for all the colonels, the staff, and ten men from every regiment, she refused him. She sent his spiritual confessor to talk with him, and she sent one of the boyards on a little mission—to persuade him to humility and peace.[1] But Peter would not listen to them.

Then Sophia sent the Patriarch, who was only too glad to go. Like the Dove from the Ark he found solid ground and did not return. He stayed at the monastery and gave his support to Peter.

Peter renewed his ukase, increased his requirements, and threatened punishment of death to those who did not obey him.[2] The effect of his having the Patriarch with him was great. A number of the Strieltsi defied the orders of Sophia and flocked out of their own accord to Troitsa. At the gates of the monastery, Peter, together with his mother and the Patriarch, welcomed them. Peter told them of the conspiracy

[1] 18th August. [2] 27th August.

against him, and asked those who knew anything to stand forth and reveal it. But all the soldiers whined before the Tsar and said they knew nothing. All they wished was to serve his Majesty and protect him from thieves and traitors, as their forefathers had done for the Tsars before him.

Patrick Gordon, weighing well the consequences, decided to go over to Peter, and with him went all the foreigners of any importance. Everyone who came in received a glass of vodka from the Tsar's own hands. The adherence of Gordon and his army turned the scale against Sophia. It became clear that she must lose.

Then Sophia herself set out for Troitsa, and reached Vozdvizhenskoe before she was turned back. Peter refused to receive her and warned her that violence might be done to her person if she persisted on the road. And, very weakly, she turned back. Reaching Moscow, she complained bitterly that they had almost shot her. Frustrated and shamed, she called together most of those who seemed to remain loyal to her and harangued them in hysterical style. Her self-pity could not have helped her cause.

There was no respite. Peter hurled repeated ukases at Moscow. On the morrow of Sophia's return came the order for Shaklovity's arrest. A list of traitors had been made from information supplied by those who had joined Peter. The Tsar ordered that they be sent to him for examination. Most of these, including Shaklovity, were prepared to flee, but the Strieltsi remaining in Moscow were now so favourable to Peter's cause that they refused to allow them to escape. Shaklovity, when at length he arrived at the monastery, was flogged, put to the torture, and beheaded.[1] So perished yet another commander of the Strieltsi.

[1] 7th September.

Sophia ordered that the man who brought the order for the arrest should have his head cut off, but it was pretended that no chopper could be found.

Golitsin slipped off on the quiet and joined his family in a villa outside the city. Presently, however, he surrendered and was banished with wife and family to the tundras, and his estates were confiscated to the Tsar.

Other "traitors" had their tongues cut out and were sent to Siberia.

It is improbable that Peter himself ordered the punishments which were meted out. These were inspired by the Narishkin family and were part of their revenge, and by the Patriarch, who, though wise, was credulous as regards sorcery and kept smelling out dark dealings with the devil. Sorcery even entered into the count against Golitsin. It figured in the evidence against a certain Medvedyef, who ultimately was tortured with hot irons and burned over a slow fire. While Peter was striking for essentials, his adherents were making the monastery an inquisition chamber.

The Tsar's next step was to dictate a letter to his brother Ivan. "... Now, Lord Brother, the time has come when we should rule the Empire as God ordained ... and as for that third shameful person our sister, be it thy will, my Lord Brother, she shall no longer arrogate the title. It is shameful, that now we are both of age she should independently of us possess the State. I declare to thee my wish and beseech permission ... to name just judges and replace those not fitted, so giving quickly peace and joy to the country. And when we are together, Lord Brother, we will put everything in order and I shall be ready to honour you as I would my father."

Following that missive, Peter ordered Sophia to

retire to a convent. The throne was lost. There was nothing left for the sister but that. It is remarkable that so slight a retribution overtook the woman who alone was primarily responsible for the intrigue against Peter and his mother. The men who were tortured and executed were guilty of little. But Peter desired Ivan to remain nominally Tsar. He did not intend to sit much in the Kremlin. There must have been those about him who urged the deposition of Ivan. But Peter was still in love with Preobrazhenskoe and the lake at Pereslavl. Also, he never had any quarrel with Ivan. Thus, needing Ivan, he could not conveniently have Ivan's "one-womb sister" executed.

VIII

So Sophia entered mortification at the New Convent a few miles from Moscow. Ivan remained the figure-head of Tsardom and sat torpidly on the silver throne. Peter went back to his games, manœuvres, and boat-building. The first man in the land became Lef Narishkin, the Tsaritsa's brother. He and the rest of the Narishkins had their way and cleared off old scores against the Miloslavsky, whom they persecuted most brutally. Witchcraft and sorcery practised upon the Tsar Peter and his mother were the pretext for much torture. Wizards were burned over slow fires.

The relatives of Peter's wife came to town and grabbed what posts they could from the Narishkins. One almost witnessed the beginning of another feud. Peter did not seem to be in the least perturbed by that or by anything else that was done in Moscow. His power was now unlimited, but he chose to be Tsar of Preobrazhenskoe rather than of Russia. Now he would have all the toys and tools and men he required. Whereas he had played with hundreds of men, now he would play with thousands.

His triumph over Sophia expressed itself in carousing. His newly-won freedom became a freedom to indulge his hobbies to the uttermost, and a freedom to be lavish in the kitchen and let off fireworks in the Kremlin. At Troitsa when the foreigners joined his standard Peter made two new friends, Gordon, whom he had for some time admired from a distance,

and the clever Swiss captain, Francis Lefort. Both of them were accomplices in prodigious eating and drinking and making merry.

Gordon and the Tsar dined together in the Kremlin, or at the house of a noble, or at Gordon's house, and let off great quantities of fireworks and singed their faces and got very drunk. The pace the Tsar set was too fast for even a seasoned Scotsman, and Gordon was frequently confined to bed for a whole day after the feast.

When Peter's wife gave birth to Alexis, Gordon paraded his troops before the Tsar, read out his congratulations, then drew up his regiments in line three deep, the first rank kneeling, the second stooping, the third standing.[1] In this position they fired all at once, while their drummers beat their drums and the colours of the regiment were abased. The Tsar was so delighted with the salute that he insisted on its repetition again and again.

Gordon became such a favourite that in the festivities of the next few days he was constantly with the Tsar, sometimes carousing with him till dawn. They let off the rockets which the Tsar had been busy making. It is recorded that one of these, exploding prematurely, blew off the head of one of the boyards.

The Scotsman was so much in the Kremlin that the Patriarch protested. The Tsar then took him away to a country house, where they dined at a little table apart from the rest of the company. The Tsar made the old man very drunk and talked him to the point of exhaustion.

All wines and brandies that Gordon cared to have imported for his own use were exempted from excise. The Tsar saw to it that the General's pay was delivered punctually. Gordon had a big house in Preobraz-

[1] 23rd February.

henskoe, but his service cost him little, being performed by soldiers and their wives. A good deal of his food came out of the rations or was charged to the account of his army. Besides that, he received substantial presents in the shape of vodkas and brandies. He could entertain in quite hearty style, and did so, as for instance when he entertained Peter and the leading boyards and the chief personages of Moscow on the 30th April, 1690. On such occasions only the men sat at table; the women, even Gordon's wife, stood behind them and encouraged them. Not that they seem to have needed a great deal of encouragement. Lefort was there, and told stories endlessly. He was the life and soul of gaiety. Younger than Gordon, he shone rather more, especially as he spoke broken Russian very fluently. But the anecdotes and the wit of these carouses would hardly charm the ears to-day.

During the six years, 1690 to 1695, Peter gave little promise of being other than an eccentric and licentious monarch. He ruined his nerves by excess. His moral nature suffered a steady deterioration. His quick temper, cruelty, and rapacious lust developed apace. It is true that he continued in his extremely useful hobbies, and yet, if the story be considered justly, his extravagances, especially in the hobby of army building, had little value. When he came to his first real fighting he found that his army was barely more than a match for the untutored Tartar, He had wasted years in rough-and-tumble amateur soldiering and in military burlesque.

Now that he was Tsar in fact as well as in name he decided to use any and all soldiers for his diversions. The Strieltsi were called upon to fight mock battles with his Preobrazhensky stable-boys.[1] Besides these, vast numbers of irregular troops were mustered.

[1] 1691.

Tramps and vagabonds of various kinds were recruited. Every noble family for a large distance around Moscow had to send its sons and retainers to take part in the noble sports.

Apart from Gordon and Lefort, who held special positions, the military favourite of the Tsar was Prince Fedor Jurievitch Romodanovsky, nicknamed "Friedrich." There was nothing German about Romodanovsky unless it was that he was given the mock title of King of Pressburg, that is, king of the fortress which the boy Peter had built. But to the Tsar he is always "Min Her Kenich." Romodanovsky became the generalissimo of the amusement regiments, now definitely named the Preobrazhensky and the Semenovsky, and beginning their great history. He was a soldier, but preferred to be a police-officer. He was a cruel and malevolent being who was well suited to be chief of the Preobrazhenskoe Military Inquisition and Minister of the knout and torture chamber. But he had a dog-like devotion to Peter, whom he always indulged and never contradicted.

Peter served under Romodanovsky, and when writing to him took pleasure in signing himself "the eternal slave of your most serene Majesty, Bombadier Peter." The summer of 1691 was largely spent besieging or defending Pressburg. A "fire-pot" exploded too near the Tsar's face and gave him a very smoky visage for the rest of the year. In September the Strieltsi had to fight the stable-boys—and so cordially did they dislike one another that they left many wounded on the field. In October, in a big battle, Prince Ivan Dolgoruky was killed.

There were many killed and wounded in all these fights, but at Russian manœuvres, now as then, some soldiers forget that they are playing. For Russians easily get carried away by the dramatic force of their

imagination, and when acting a part emotionally forget that it is a part.

But Peter was an experimenter with explosives. His nature craved the brutality of the burst. There was a great waste of powder in all the sham fights, and when the fights were over an almost greater waste in fireworks. In these elaborate and fearful firework displays men got their heads blown off, others, like Gordon's son-in-law, were burned to death. The explosions, the rain of flaming sulphur drops, the far-springing lateral flares, were a source of vast primitive delight to which danger perhaps gave zest.

There is no doubt that the fireworks made Peter popular with his growing armies. But Peter was not urged to these feats in pyrotechnics by vanity or love of praise. Anything he did with his own hands gave him unusual pleasure. But the explosions, great noises, flares, and frights appealed to his sense of humour. His own nature was becoming very explosive, flaring, and dangerous.

The foreigners were greatly amused by Peter. Hundreds of them had officers' rank in the new army. Gordon, who was not given to phrase-making, called the exercises a military ballet. Lefort, however, played up to the Tsar's passion for small detail. Peter carried through his games to their logical conclusions; never threw up his hands and said suddenly, "This is nonsense," and was quit of it. His conceits grew and fed one another.

Meanwhile Lef Narishkin and the other arrivists in Moscow upset the Duma and set its counsels at nought. The great boyards lost their power and became mere spectators of corrupt and cruel government. Sophia remained closely guarded in her convent, and Ivan remained dumb. The tall, striding Peter, if seen in

the city, would be searching for books, plans, models. He did not rule, and quite curiously was not consciously preparing himself to rule. He confessed later that nothing was in his mind but his amusement.

He was, however, tireless. He seemed to have all the energy that the other sons of Alexis lacked. He worked from dawn to dark and made merry all night. He slept on the floor in a friend's house, or he shared a tent with a soldier. He saw less and less of his wife and soft beds. In him something of the Spartan ideal was realised.

Peter listened greatly to Lefort, and took him to himself as a friend with such winning and affectionate abandonment that it is difficult to believe that the same person could be barbarous, fierce, and cruel. Lefort, better than any one who had ever come to Russia, told the tale of the marvellous West. The call of the West which came to Peter in the nursery through Matveyef he kept hearing ever louder through adolescence, repeated by Zommer, by Timmerman, by Van Hulst, by Brand, by Gordon, by Lefort. It begot in him an infinite respect for Europeans, and, in counter, some considerable disrespect for Russians and their ways.

The old Patriarch Joachim, before he died in March 1690, strove hard to remedy this fault in Peter, and in his testament he implored him not to allow heretics to command regiments. Apparently also he had won over Peter's mother to his point of view; for Natalia openly opposed Peter's choice of a new Patriarch. He wanted a scholarly, liberal Patriarch, tolerant to foreigners and to other faiths. The Tsaritsa was in favour of a traditional type. She won her way, and Adrian of Kazan was elected Patriarch. But Peter was not in the least put out, and was soon to celebrate his defeat by electing a mock Patriarch. Thenceforth

the real Patriarch had very little real influence on his life or destiny.

Nothing, however, clouded the relationship of mother and son, which remained of the tenderest kind. Natalia had not stood the strain of Court intrigue very well. The danger in which she and her son Peter had lived told on her nerves. She was now beset by foolish maternal anxiety lest Peter should get drowned in his favourite lake, and even exacted promises from the Tsar, when he went to Archangel, that he would not sail on the sea.

The Tsar built his own yacht and sailed it on the little Moscow River in the spring of 1691. Next year the whole Court was forced to spend the summer at Pereslavl. Peter and his Dutchmen arranged a continuous regatta. Probably some of the foreigners laughed. Navigation of this little lake was child's play. The Tsar ought to face the sea, which was more worthy of his efforts. He did not need urging. Next year, as soon as the northern ice and snow were melted, he set off with a large company for the White Sea.

It took over four weeks to get there, the roughest possible journey, eight hundred or a thousand miles through forest and swamps, a region sparsely populated now, how much more so then. It was Peter's first journey beyond the province of Moscow. What happened upon it would alone have made a diverting and instructive chronicle.

Peter, like an impetuous schoolboy, climbed the rigging and the masts of the foreign ships in Archangel Harbour, made friends with captains and sailors, inspected every nautical device, having a curiosity that seemed naïve and boyish, but which was, in fact, intensely practical. He overlooked his promise to his mother not to go out to sea, and took many safe

joy-rides to Solombola and Holmagora and the islands in the mouth of the Dvina river.

Natalia besought her darling to return home quickly, as she was so terribly anxious about him. She said she had given him in prayer to the safe keeping of the Most Holy Virgin.[1]

"In that case," replied Peter, petulantly, "if I am in the care of the Mother of God, what is there for you to worry about?" Nevertheless he asked her blessing, signing himself—"unworthy Petrushka."

Peter seized the opportunity of dealing with the trading vessels, and ordered a number of things to be delivered at Archangel next summer, including a ship from Holland. He had a wharf constructed and laid the keel of a large boat. He drank schnapps and feasted with many foreign captains and merchants. At the same time he made a good impression upon the Archangel Russians, who, astonished to see the sacred monarch in their midst, were even more astonished to see him clad in leather, axe in hand, working in the docks. But the Tsar had every appearance of being very religious, was on good terms with the Archbishop, and actually sang in the choir in the cathedral and sometimes read the Gospels in the Mass.

One of Peter's regrets was that in this land of the midnight sun it was impossible to have firework displays. In July the sun does not set; in August twilight prevails through the small hours. Peter hardly dare postpone his departure till the dark night season. But in preparation for his last night in the city he got ready a handsome supply of rockets and bombs and flares and wheels, and let them off—with great risk of forest fires and of the complete destruction of the resinous wooden city. That was on the 19th September. In October he was back

[1] August.

again in Moscow. He had now adopted the title of "skipper" in preference to "bombardier," and his imagination, for the moment, was entirely captured by the sea. His plans for the following year at Archangel were elaborate and ambitious. His enthusiasm in speaking to Gordon about it knew no bounds, and he insisted that the old General should come along.

But in January [1] his mother suddenly fell ill and died, and Peter was plunged into a profound physical grief which shook his whole being. The foreigners were somewhat surprised to see the cynical, debonair young Tsar so cast down. His facial convulsions, gloom, and appalling prostration of spirit must have caused some apprehension among his friends. Two nights in succession Lefort made a feast in his house, trying to cheer him, but he sat lonely and apart, brooding, steeped in awful sorrow.

All Peter's mentors were gone. At twenty-two he was without father or mother. There was no Matveyef or Patriarch Joachim. The young man had no old man near him, only a pack of foreigners and young bloods. But he had his tremendous will, his feeling of destiny, and he had Russia.

[1] 25th January.

IX

Dwarfs, buffoons, Lefort's dancing-girls, feasting, drinking—these could not divert Peter. But the thought of ships did divert him. "Of my misery and this last grief I can but dully tell you. My hand simply will not write about these. Let me, like Noah, resting a little from misery and leaving that which will not return, write of the living . . ." Yes, prepare for the second expedition to Archangel.

It is curious that at this point he had so little thought for his wife and child. They were powerless to give him consolation. A ship on the stocks was like a son, and a wharf like its mother.

A considerable quantity of material was taken north this time, especially tools. The Army commissariat was employed, and with the help of Gordon, who accompanied, the great party was provided with sufficient to drink. The Tsar was no sportsman, but there were those with him who could shoot the abundant moorcock and provide something auxiliary to the meagre diet of the northern peasants.

Peter preferred to be known all the way as "the skipper." But Gordon was appointed "Rear-Admiral of the Fleet." Gordon accepted the rank with Scotch solemnity. Romodanovsky, the "King of Pressburg," became Admiral. But there were only two ships to the Fleet, and these were in supposition.

They set out on the 29th April. They arrived at Archangel on the 18th May. The ship ordered from

Holland had not arrived. The other ship was completed on the stocks and waiting to be launched.

Having been sprinkled and blessed and prayed for and sung, the *Saint Paul* was launched by Peter and his mouzhiks, and a good ship rode on the sea, bearing Peter and Gordon and the Archbishop of the city and the new Admiral Romodanovsky and a number of people. The skipper shouted and stamped and ruled his ship, and was so exalted and satisfied that nothing short of the greatest libation to Bacchus was due.

Then the Dutch ship came, the one ordered by Peter the year before, the *Santa Profeetie*, a frigate with forty-four guns, a real man-of-war, and it could be said that the Russian fleet was begun. Peter could hardly contain himself in the excitement of receiving this ship.

" What I have long wished is now being realised," he wrote. " You shall hear more by next post. Now to make merry. It is difficult to write in detail, or rather, it is impossible. On such occasions one reverences Bacchus, who with his vine-leaves covers up the eyes of those who want to write long letters."

That night Peter handed to Gordon his plans, written in Russian, for a cruise. These Gordon translated and accepted as sailing orders. A week before this an English ship with twenty-six guns had come to anchor off Archangel, and this and other English and Dutch vessels were returning homeward. Owing to the fact that a Dutchman was reigning on the throne of England, there was presumably one convoy for the vessels of both nations. Peter decided to accompany them with his " fleet " to the limit of Russian waters.

So they all set forth together,[1] first the Vice-

[1] 31st July.

admiral's (Buturlin's) ship, following that four Dutch ships, then the Admiral's ship, and following that four English ships and Gordon's yacht. They reached Holy Cape, *Sviatoi Nos*, on the White Sea, parted with the foreigners, and with colours flying sailed successfully back home again to the roadstead.

The visits to Archangel and these enterprises gave great encouragement to northern trade. Twenty-nine foreign merchants had offices or warehouses at Archangel in 1693; by 1702 the number had increased to a hundred and forty-nine, and by 1716 to two hundred and thirty-three. It was only with the construction of St. Petersburg and the development of the Baltic marine that Peter grew cold to the great port of the north. In 1722 he suddenly forbade Archangel to import more than was needed for local requirements. Next year scarcely a ship came. Trade was ruined there, and never really recovered.

To Peter, after all, Archangel was also a play-ground, a larger Pereslavl. The Baltic was to be his reality.

In August he hurried back to Moscow for the greatest sham fight of his career, the famous Kozhukhovsky campaign, in which some thirty thousand men took part. It is considered to be the last of Peter's military games. Henceforth his fighting was to be real, with real enemies, and he was to have plenty of it. Next year the junta in power over Peter's head decided to fight the Tartars again, and Peter decided he must go in Gordon's army. In that decision he stepped at last from boyhood to manhood.

X

A WINTER of feasting and drinking intervened. Peter became a prodigious drinker, and could easily drink most of his company under the table. Lefort and he had a joyous rivalry in liquor, and it is difficult to say which had the stronger head. They had begun a cult of Bacchus in which the burlesque side of Peter found increasing expression.

The Tsar sent north, south, east and west for dwarfs, funny faces, idiots and freaks. Some hatred of himself found voice in a passion for dwarfs. He was nearly six feet nine inches in height himself, but he lived in a hut he made for himself at Preobrazhenskoe, and it was so low he could put his hand on the roof. He always stooped indoors. When given a palatial apartment in someone else's house he had a low canvas ceiling put in, so that still he must stoop. And he bought and retained a swarm of dwarfs. He was particularly taken with some of the tiny dwellers of the tundras, especially the Samoyedes, of whom he brought several south with him. Quaint hunch-backs with hook noses, skinny freaks with piping voices, half-saints and silly persons who made friends with birds and animals, men with bulbous noses and moustaches like whips, monstrous types from the Kalmuck plains, all began to muster in the foreign suburb and at Preobrazhenskoe.

The greatest man in Russia was Ivan Durak, Ivan the Fool. The mediæval potentate prefers to be ranker in his own army; the man of genius hails the

fool. Peter saw in his fools and dwarfs an aristocracy of mirth—real lords of his whim and fancy. And when he was in the mood all men had to be fools. Like Charles the Ninth of France pirouetting on his heels for an hour with his whole Court, so Peter acted the fool, and all must act the fool with him.

The great nobles came forth sprawling on bridled pigs, or seated upon bulls like Kalmouks, pulling cords from rings in the animals' nostrils to guide them, or riding sagacious wolf-hounds, or seated upon butting goats. They dressed themselves in many colours, painted their noses and wore head-dresses of plaited bast. Their coats hung in cats' paws on strings, or tails of rats. Their sleeves were sewn round with mice. Peter, like Gulliver in Lilliput, would be seen drawn in a diminutive carriage by dwarfs in harness.

All who can crow, bark, mew, bray, cackle, neigh, or make disgusting noises will be pleasing. Peter and his Generals and Admirals dine together and compete in who will make most noise breaking wind under the table.

Lefort and the foreigners re-dish Boccaccio and every indecent camp story. Guests satisfy Nature's need without leaving the banquet-hall. Human decency is gone, and brutishness exalted amid buffoonery and drunken mirth.

It is no wonder that the new Patriarch Adrian looked askance upon the doings and company of the monarch. Peter might have signs of genius and national greatness, but his name and reputation fell low in all serious and religious Russia. Peter was annoyed by that high spiritual authority in his realm which had such power to rebuke him. As if to insult the Patriarch, and further to outrage the pious and the simple, Peter made an elaborate mockery of the

Church; called together an unholy Synod of most faithful drunkards and elected a mock Patriarch. In later years he was to abolish the true Patriarchate altogether and leave the mockery still extant.

His old tutor and play-master, Nikita Zotof, became "The Most Clownish Father Joanikit, Patriarch of Pressburg, Kokui and the River Yausa," and Peter, bombardier in the Army, skipper in the Navy, carried his burlesque humility a stage further to become merely deacon in the Church of Bacchus. But there were Bishops and Archbishops in this Church, and they wore mitres of tin with scrawled pictures on them of a naked Bacchus astride a barrel. And when the whole company was drunk they parodied the hymns and the prayers and burlesqued the most solemn liturgies and rituals of the Orthodox Church, scattering vodka for Holy Water, exaggerating in buffoonery every characteristic of Holy Russia, the prostrations and croonings and religious ejaculations. One Palm Sunday the mock Patriarch with his tin mitre on his head was sent round Moscow on a camel. It was excused as a scoff at the Roman Church—for the mitre was Romish in shape. When the mock patriarchal rites were carried out at Pressburg they were more extravagant than in Moscow.

Begun on a drunken impulse, the mock Church took Peter's fancy. It grew upon him. He took pen and paper and drew up its rubric. He and his topers composed its anthems—

In the name of all drunkards,
In the name of all tipplers,
In the name of all fools,
In the name of all clowns,
In the name of all want-wits,
In the name of all vodkas,

In the name of all wines,
In the name of all beers,
In the name of all flasks,
In the name of all pots,
In the name of all barrels,
In the name of all buckets,
In the name of all mugs,
In the name of all glasses and cups,
In the name of all cards, dice, and spillikins,
In the name of all tobaccos and taverns,
For there is the dwelling of our father, Bacchus,
Amen.

with much more in similar vein. Peter never abandoned the development of a burlesque Church. It lasted all his life, becoming later, in St. Petersburg, a monstrous growth. Its beginnings at Pressburg were rash but gay, even Falstaffian.

It had its sinister aspect. In Moscow the Dictator of the country, Lef Narishkin, and his confederates were flogging, burning men and women at the stake, tearing out tongues, torturing. Outside Moscow Peter and his followers were making a mockery of God, life, and Russia. It was high time for a diversion, for war against the Tartar, Holy War.

Peter was not at first interested in going to war. He wished to visit Holland, but Lefort surmised that popular wrath would be visited upon the foreigners if they were left in Russia unprotected and without prestige. For the Tsar Peter was their unique protector. Lefort was anxious that the military exercises, engineering, and boat-building of Peter and his helpers should be shown to be of some use to the country. He was therefore very glad when the chance came for the foreigners to join the Army and to march out with drums beating against the Tartar.

XI

Turks and Tartars encircled the Black Sea, and their sway extended north of the Crimea to Azof, Little Russia then called Little Tartary, Podolia, Bessarabia, and right across the Balkan Peninsula to Bosnia, a menace alike to Austria, Poland, and Russia. There were those who predicted, much to the mirth of Voltaire, that the Tartar would once more sweep over Russia and a new horde impose their yoke upon her.

The call of the Byzantine monks and of the holy places of the south must be heard because the attempt to deliver Christian people from the Moslem was also a measure of defence for Russia. It was already the historic rôle of Russia to stand between Europe and the barbarians.

The mind of the Tsar was restless and unsatisfied. On the alert for great enterprises, he had been dissuaded from the project of finding a Northern passage to India and China, dissuaded also from attempting to break through to the Baltic with two vessels, dissuaded finally from building a Caspian fleet at Astrakhan. He turned instead to the historic task of fighting the Turk.

He was headlong, he was cocksure. He believed that at once he could win victories and glory. But with all his foreign aid and preliminary training he was nevertheless destined to strange disillusionment. His foreigners proved to be too unpractical, theoretical, and quarrelsome. The only victories were, after all,

gained by the regular old-fashioned army and the Cossacks under Sheremetief, and not by the amusement regiments and the Strieltsi under Golovin, Lefort, and Gordon.

The first army under Sheremetief, assisted by wild Mazeppa and his horse, operated along the Dnieper in the west. The second, in which Peter marched, operated in the east, along the Don, and had as its objective the reduction of the fortress of Azof. The first went by land; the second, at Peter's wish, was shipped down the Volga and took an extraordinarily long time to make the voyage.

Gordon led out the advance guard by land,[1] Peter and the main body embarked in old-fashioned galleys and barges upon the little Moscow River and were rowed to the River Oka at Kolomna, thence on larger waters they wandered alongside forested banks to Riazan. At Riazan the Tsar received some of the personages of the town. They were considerably abashed at being presented to the monarch. To the first, Peter said, "What is your name?" He replied, "Makar." "This is very good," said Peter. Overhearing this, his neighbour, when asked his name, replied also "Makar," and so on. Everyone said he was Makar, greatly to Peter's mirth. On account of this the people of Riazan were nicknamed Makars.

From Riazan the army went to Nizhni Novgorod, and then down Mother Volga to Tsaritsin. They went a thousand miles by water if they went a yard. And although going with the current, they frequently encountered storms which delayed them for days at a time.

But there was plenty of vodka and Rhenish and beer. They foraged liberally upon the country. The gentry and the landowners and serfs brought copious gifts

[1] April.

of food and drink. Peter had some clowns and minstrels along with him. He had also the most holy and drunken Patriarch of the River Yauza. For those who did not have to row it was a great picnic. The vague vast surface of the brown Volga resounded with northern song.

"We are going to play at Azof too," wrote Peter to *Her Kenich* Romodanovsky, whom he had left at Moscow. But there was not much play after they left the Volga.

Disembarking at Tsaritsin, the unfortunate soldiers, worn out by rowing, had to drag Peter's cannon over the rough roads to the River Don.[1] For horses were few. Perhaps they had also to drag some of the boats. At the Don all re-embarked for Novo-Cherkask, circulating with the river among the southern steppes. They passed Cherkask, they passed the region where now stands the great modern city of Rostof-on-the-Don, and at a point about five miles from the Sea of Azof, halted. That was on St. Peter's Day, the 29th of June. The prayers and incense of the great consecration of the Army floated upward to a wide open heaven, and Peter wrote to his "Pressburg King," "Surely the children of hell shall not overcome us."

He was traditionally religious in his attitude to the campaign, and, though relying greatly on his Dutchmen, felt also that most certainly he had the Holy Virgin on his side. In this there was no trace of cynicism in the Tsar. The child Peter lived alongside in his soul with the buffoon, and did not converse. One never seemed to set the other at naught. This, it may be said, was an important psychological feature of this unusual man.

The Moslem, grasping that he was to be attacked in

[1] June.

force, sent to Asia for reinforcements, which speedily followed across the Black Sea. On the 7th July the Russian batteries opened fire, Peter himself serving the guns.

Gordon was snubbed and his advice not taken on this campaign. Peter was led by the boon companions of the voyage, and largely by Lefort. The Turks did not seem greatly dismayed by the novel shells and explosives which the Russians managed to pitch over. But they yielded to the old-fashioned warfare of the Don Cossacks, who drove them from an important redoubt, a tower with earthworks upon the high bank of the river. Peter was encouraged by an initial success. But apparently he and his whole army slept during the heat of the day. One of the Dutchmen went over to the enemy and disclosed this fact, together with all the dispositions of the troops. A successful sortie was made by the Moslem, led by a traitorous Old Believer, and a severe defeat was inflicted. Nine field guns were captured by the enemy, and all the heavy guns put out of action. Next day the Cossacks took another fort which the defenders had abandoned, and it was possible to celebrate a victory. But the main effect was defeat.

In possession of the forts the enemy could get much nearer the citadel. Peter saw it was a wasps' nest whose many wasps kept stinging. He thought of smoking it out. Timmerman and Wiede were set to work to devise means of blowing it up. Mines were dug in approved text-book style. But unfortunately, one after another, they blew up at the wrong end and destroyed only Russians. Likewise, frontal attacks failed. The resistance of the enemy grew more staunch and the spirit of the Russians somewhat languished. Lefort said they needed a few thousand more men. But the truth was that the triple command

did not know its own mind, and the presence of Peter was an embarrassment rather than a help.

The retreat began on the 27th September. Guerilla bands of Tartars fell upon the rear-guard, a tidal wave followed from the Azof Sea and destroyed many men, horses, and carts. A whole regiment and its Colonel fell into the hands of the Tartars. Then it was found that the summer sun had as usual killed all grass and every green thing upon the Steppes, which were burned out. Even so the Steppes were swept by piercing winds. Wolves followed at night, attacking weak horses and dysentery-stricken soldiers. The Army trailed death and disease as it faded away northward.

Peter, driving one miserable Turkish prisoner in front of him, celebrated victory upon his return to Moscow. But the survivors of the campaign spread the real story. The Strieltsi did not think so much of their young monarch. Moscow was cold to him. But there was considerable fear of Peter. There was no mutiny, no renewal of insurrection.

XII

When Golitsin had come home with a sham victory Peter had refused to receive him. But now he also was in a false position and was covering up an even greater defeat than that which had taken place six years before. But he did not hide disaster from himself; he was no hypocrite. His will would not suffer being thwarted. The defeat spurred him to extraordinary efforts. He was determined in the following year to make good his losses.

He would not listen to the clamour against the foreign heretics. Instead of banishing them he sent for more. From the Doge of Venice he obtained the service of thirteen adepts in shipbuilding; from the Elector of Brandenburg he received more engineers and men skilled in the laying of mines. He mobilised all the Dutch carpenters from Archangel. He set to work twenty-six thousand Russians hewing and cutting timber. For he had decided to attack Azof from the river and the sea. A better water route to the south was surveyed. The Volga was left out of account. For by embarking at Voronezh on the Voronezh River, which flowed directly into the Don, many weeks might be saved.

He had ordered from Holland, when at Archangel, a galley which could serve him as a model should he wish to build a fleet on the Caspian Sea. This he had taken to pieces and had every piece numbered according to design. The whole was carted to Moscow and re-set up again for his carpenters and shipbuilders.

He made the Russians work as they never had worked before, setting them an example, working himself with adze and plane with tireless energy. It is said that he built the first of the new galleys, the *Principium*, absolutely with his own hands. Yet he was ill all the winter, suffering, like the rest of the sons of Alexis, from swollen feet. His brother Ivan died in January, but that made no difference in Peter's way of life. He lived in a little wooden house near the scene of his immense shipbuilding enterprise, drank beer and muscatel now and again with Lefort and his friends, but he worked sixteen hours a day, commonly rising long before dawn to begin the morning, working by pitch flares. He was a tremendous workman. Hundreds of workers grew ill or could not stand the pace, and fled, risked the lash, escaped from this incredible giant foreman-Tsar! But the work went on.

In April, including the long line of new galleys and fireships, there were at the disposal of Admiral Lefort some thirteen hundred vessels. The various military units had been despatched betimes to the port of embarkation, and on the 27th all was ready, the " sea caravan " was under weigh. Peter was a captain. Boyar Shein was unique commander of the forces. The absurdity of the triple command in the first campaign had been foreseen and remedied.

Lefort gave a great feast at Voronezh in honour of departure,[1] and every imaginable toast, real and imaginary, was given. But when with great solemnity " was drank the Usurpator of Great Britain his health," Gordon publicly refused, and drank instead to the good health of King James.

Peter was in great spirits. His armada was ready, at the earliest possible moment of use, the thawing of

[1] 19th April.

the ice. And the swelling of his foot had gone. He was full of zest for the new enterprise and believed he must win.

On the *Principium* he drew up regulations for all his skippers; detailed signalling and alarms; a remarkable document. He now wrote much more freely, and sent lively letters to his friends, describing all that he did. "On the 15th (May) our caravan got to Cherkask; on the 18th to the forts, on the 19th to the mouth of the sea, where we saw the enemy standing with thirteen ships."

The new fleet justified itself, for the Turkish vessels were driven off, and Azof was completely invested. The defenders were impressed by the great show of force, and fought with less fierceness than in the previous campaign. The Cossacks, as lively in their fast-flying leather boats as on their horses, got into hand-to-hand conflict. The cannon made a great uproar, though their discharges seldom hit the mark.

Gordon employed a very unusual method of storming the town under cover of an advancing, overheaping rampart of loose earth and mud thrown constantly forward by twelve thousand men with shovels. This process of making the mountain come to Mahomet continued for five weeks, when it reached the fosse, which incontinently filled up with earth. The Moslem lost heart and began lowering his flags and waving his hats in sign of surrender.

An arrow with a missive was shot into the town.[1] The Tartars replied. An armistice was negotiated wherein the enemy evacuated the position with wives, children, and treasure. Then the Russians entered into possession. Byzantine crosses were mounted upon the crescents over the mosques. The double-

[1] 18th July.

eagle waved on high. The new fleet proudly sailed upon the Sea of Azof.

Azof had been in Russian hands before, captured by the Don Cossacks in the time of the first Romanof, but its re-capture was a great victory. The moral effect was out of proportion to the small territory gained. This little campaign rocked all the bells of Christendom. Poland, Austria and Germany, Venice, all were passive allies of Peter and supposed well-wishers. The victory was exaggerated; the Tsar gained such repute by it that the politicians of the West began to fear him and wish that he had had another reverse. It was a signal. Russia, after her revolutions and insurrections, showed that she would be herself again. The legends and stories about the eccentric boy Tsar cleared somewhat to show the hard contour of a great personality.

It made Peter's projected journey to the West more possible. It also re-established him with the Patriarch and the Church. It was possible for him to write to Adrian from the field of battle as one in arms for Christ and winning victories at which every Christian man could rejoice. The Patriarch wept for joy and ordered the great Kremlin bell to be struck, calling an innumerable multitude to prayer.

Before returning from the south the Tsar surveyed his new territory, and decided to make a port at Taganrog and to fill up Azof and the adjoining country with Russian families transported from the interior. Then, in anticipation of a Roman triumph in Moscow, he desired Vinius to have built for his army a new bridge over the Moscow River. This, Vinius said, he could not do in the time. Instead, he had the city decorated with triumphal arches and figures of Hercules and Mars and Neptune. The army was a long time coming back, for the

Tsar stayed at Tula to make a thorough inspection of the iron-works there. But when he did arrive the reception was all that any victor could have wished.

Gordon thought *he* won the war, and to him were given a medal worth six ducats—he always weighed his medals—a gold cup, a costly robe of sables, and an estate with ninety slaves.

Lefort also thought *he* won the war, and in reward he was made Vice-Duke of Novgorod; he received in gift several villages and an estate near Moscow with two hundred slaves, a great number of pieces of figured cloth, a robe of sables, and a golden vase with the name of the Tsar engraved upon it.

The Admiral entered Moscow in a gilded sleigh,[1] and behind him on foot walked the man who had built the fleet and fought a second time and won, modest Captain Peter.

[1] 30th September.

XIII

It is hardly just to call those near to Peter his "favourites," for he used them, he was not used by them. It has been said that he was influenced by them, that Boris Golitsin taught him to drink, that Lefort helped to debauch him sexually, that Romodanovsky encouraged his cruelty, that the Dutchmen fired him to build ships and Gordon to organise an army. But Peter would probably have done all he did with an entirely different set of companions. And most other princes of Russia with similar companions would have come early to grief.

It is certain that he had a great capacity for using men, and also that he had a fatal facility in assimilating their vices and foibles. And he greatly affected the lives of those he used.

Andrew Vinius, the well-educated son of a wealthy Dutch merchant resident in Moscow, might seem to be destined to a somewhat dull career of scholarship. He had written a book on Geography. But Peter made him an artillerist, a specialist in guns and explosives. Peter sedulously learned Dutch from him, and especially with a view to going to Holland. For he was more impressed with the report of Dutch civilisation than of any other. Vinius was a Latin scholar with a fad for classical allusions which were strangely alien to the spirit of Russia but took the fancy of Peter. Anything that was entirely foreign to Russia took his fancy. It is probably to Vinius that Peter's daw-like use of classical names is due. For

Vinius he calls himself *Petrus*, and for him names his first galley *Principium*. When Vinius reports fires in Moscow, Peter inquires, "What is your Vulcan doing?" It is Vinius who supplies the detail for the orgies in honour of Bacchus; he who erects figures of Mars and Hercules in the town. As in general, then as now, Russia was without classical statues and entirely divorced from Greek mythology and unattracted by it, this rape of public taste by Vinius was popularly detested.

Through Romodanovsky the Tsar inculcated fear among the Strieltsi and the rest of the Army. Peter was more playful with him than with any other, and kept up the game of being "thy serf," "thy majesty's most humble serf," in his innumerable letters. He made the "King of Pressburg" his. He indulged the King's cruelty and was at home in his elaborate torture chambers, with him devising new means of racking and twisting, applying the torture himself, yes, wielding the cudgels and the knout there at Preobrazhensky. Public opinion was not against the use of torture, but personal use of it by the monarch was vile. But Peter was not fastidious, not white-handed and remote. Also, he had none of the milk of human kindness in him, no sympathy with the sufferer. He was more cruel, if also more sane, than Ivan the Terrible, whom he greatly admired. But possibly a streak of madness in Peter was accountable for his cruelty. Cruelty roused him to terrible rages, and these rages to still more cruelty.

The urbane Lefort cared for none of these things. His temperament was Gallic. He loved titles, grandeur, hospitality, women, and song. He taught Peter to dance, he found him attractive women to sleep with. He took entertaining off Peter's hands, but did it royally. The monarch had greater pleasure

in being a guest than in sitting at the head of the table. Handsome and abundant in person, taking pleasure in dress and in style, this Genevan was a strange contrast to Peter, who went about in workman's clothes, in darned stockings and cobbled boots. But Peter made him run. He was a superb runner on Peter's business, a butler, major-domo, courier, procurer, cellarer, secretary and agent with no soul or will of his own. Peter thanked him with gifts and with titles and with sops to his vanity. The Tsar did many striking things; Lefort took the how.

Menshikof, that man "of the lowest possible breed," was the understudy of Lefort. He had sold hot pies in the street in his youth. He now knew where to turn to get good pasties made, where to find good beer and matured vodka. In those vast marauding army manœuvres at Kozhukhovy and elsewhere there were many complaints of the looting of larders and cellars. Lefort had found the Tsar an agreeable mistress in the person of the German girl Anna Mons; Menshikof greatly helped in the Pressburg orgies by attracting girls of light behaviour for the mock court.

For the Tsar had never loved his chosen wife Eudoxia. She was pious and sombre and did not correspond to his wild gaiety. Peter was not lascivious. He was reproached in that his family did not continue growing like that of a normal Tsar. He did not in youth produce many illegitimates. Women were part of burlesque and rude mirth. He handled them very roughly, and if he commonly slept with one it was because he was terrified of sleeping alone. He held women in his arms in order to sleep; he held them to save himself from having fits. He must hold on to someone in bed. When he could not get a woman he held an orderly.

It might be surmised that in that case he would probably have proved to be a faithful husband. But there distaste entered, and he reached the point when he would rather have a fit than sleep with his wife; in short, he began to consider how he could get rid of her.

Eudoxia was jealous and angry. She reproached Menshikof with taking her husband to those places where formerly he had sold pies. But she seems to have been a quiet and humble woman who when put into a convent took the will of her husband as the will of God and remained shut away for over thirty years there without complaint. But her relatives the Lopukhini were not so humble. Taking advantage of the umbrage of the Tsar, the Narishkins were driving them out of all lucrative positions and they resented it.

During the winter between the Azof triumph and the departure of the Tsar for Western Europe there were many signs of ferment, discontent, and conspiracy—discontent with the foreigners, with the low bearing of the Tsar, and with the bribery and corruption practised by the Narishkins. The alert Romodanovsky got upon the trail of serious sedition, and was soon putting scores of people to the question. Peter, full of plans for foreign travel, was in no mood to dally with conspirators, and he met them with ferocious full face.

One of the first to be suspected of conspiring against the Tsar was Peter Abramovitch Lopukhin, who held a magisterial jurisdiction within the great palace and had power to commit to the torture or the knout. He was Eudoxia's uncle; nevertheless, it is said, Peter put the old man to the torture with his own hands.

Towards the end of 1696 a somewhat rash monk,

Abraham of Troitsky Monastery, made a collection of overheard whispers and slanders, wrote them down in a copy-book, and presented the same to the Tsar. He was tortured for his pains and made to say all he knew or thought he knew about the authors of the slanders.

The monk pointed to three clerks, Krenef, Bubnof, and Rudnef. They were flogged with the knout and sent to Azof to help populate it.

The monk also said that the boyard Matvey Miloslavsky at confession at Troitsa had deplored the fact that a good and serviceable man like Peter Lopukhin had been tortured.

One of Father Abraham's personal objections to the behaviour of the Tsar was that he went on foot in the triumphal procession following General Shein and Admiral Lefort, who rode. It was Russian tradition for a Tsar to be Tsar. The monk's idea was to stand up and tell Peter the truth to his face. But it did not work. After torture he was banished to a distant monastery.

Romodanovsky soon came upon the trail of something more serious. Tsikler, that Colonel of Strieltsi who had been first to desert Sophia for Peter seven years before, had never been rewarded. Peter disliked him. Now he was to be sent to help lay the foundations of the new port of Taganrog. This seemed to him like banishment, and caused him so much mortification and rage that he was of a mind not to obey. The murder of the Tsar seemed a more attractive enterprise.

Tsikler was arrested and under torture named his fellow-conspirators, Alexis Sokovnin and Fedor Pushkin, who objected to their children being sent abroad by order of the Tsar to be taught in heretical countries. Sokovnin was also an Old Believer, and objected to the

Tsar smoking tobacco and shaving his beard. Pushkin was also being sent to Azof and did not wish to go.

Peter bearded Sokovnin in his own house and struck him to the ground. He was taken away to be flogged. After ten blows he confessed and implicated Pushkin. After five blows Pushkin confessed.

Tsikler was tortured more, and said more, brought in the two Strieltsi Philipof and Rozhin and the Cossack Lukianof. He said also that seven years earlier Sophia had suggested to him the murder of the Tsar, and Ivan Miloslavsky had indicated the way it could be done. Peter's nervous rage upon hearing this was almost ungovernable. He was with difficulty restrained from bringing Sophia from her convent to torture her. The corpse of Ivan Miloslavsky was dug up and brought from Preobrazhenskoe, tied to pigs who, driven, dragged it to the Red Square to the foot of the great new scaffold which was being erected.

Peter was just leaving his country for eighteen months' travel. There are few who would not have said that his departure was unwise. The menace was great. The fires of revolt had been smouldering secretly for seven years and increasing. Sophia behind her convent bars still had hope of escape.

A spectacular execution was designed.[1] In this spoke the ferocity of Peter and also some prudence. He was satisfying himself, but also he was reading conspirators a lesson. A high stone pillar with six iron pegs was set up in the Red Square. Tsikler, Sokovnin, Pushkin, Philipof, Rozhin, and Lukianof had their arms and legs cut off. Limbless, but living, they were raised on to a scaffold and beheaded, and their blood trickled down on to the body of Ivan

[1] 5th March.

Miloslavsky lying below in an open box. The heads were then hung on the pegs on the stone pillar and remained there till the crows picked them clean.

It was Peter's farewell gesture to his country. Five days later the *grande ambassade* left for the West.

XIV

Peter and his company avoided Poland. The King of that country, John Sobieski, had died in June, and the throne was now in dispute. There were several candidates for election, the chief of whom were the French Prince Conti and Augustus, Elector of Saxony, of whom Peter was a partisan. France being on friendly terms with the Turks, the election of Conti would have meant the alienation of Poland from the ostensible cause of Christendom. Peter warned the Polish nobles that the election of the Frenchman would mean the end of the " eternal peace " between Poland and Russia. Considering the political danger in Warsaw, the *grande ambassade* thought it more prudent to travel by a northern route, through Swedish territory. At that time Sweden held by force of arms Ingerman land, Zivonia, Esthonia and other Southern Baltic territories.

The Tsar chose to go through Swedish territory in complete incognito. He was Peter Mikhailof, a carpenter. It was given out that the Emperor had repaired to Voronezh to continue the work on his fleet. The Swedes showed no desire to discover the secret. In this they were tactless, for they must have known that the Tsar was among them. They certainly under-estimated the political significance of the trip and quite possibly despised the Russians as barbarous and uncivilised. Peter never forgave them their incivility and was the first, later on, to cast with his own hands a bomb at Riga.

Upwards of two hundred Russians went along. Of these some sixty were "personages," and the rest were retainers, apprentices, clowns, and guards. Except for Peter, the gentry were dressed in utmost grandeur. It must have seemed something of a masquerade. Lefort, attired as a Khan of Tartary, had a retinue of ten gentlemen dressed in flowing robes, fifteen servants, an orchestra, and four dwarfs. Some Caucasian prince with scimitar dangling in front of him was constantly taken for a Persian. Most of the Russians wore high hats covered with pearls. They journeyed in sledges all the way to Riga, for the snow had not melted and the rivers were still frozen over. They drove by Novgorod the Great, which they reached in a week, and thence via Pskov two weeks more through black, famine-stricken territory, and got to Riga at the end of the month. That was very rapid travelling for such a large company, but scarcity of provisions made them go faster. They hoped that at Riga they would be hospitably entertained.

Peter, however, was too observant of military dispositions and obviously a spy in his own service. The Governor received the party very coldly. There were no festivities, no salutes. The Russians had to pay for all they ate and drank, and pay dearly. The Tsar wrote to Vinius in invisible ink that they were being treated like slaves. "I will write you above or underneath the ink," he had warned him from Novgorod, and he must have been proud of this piece of Western smartness. It served him to give military information to Romodanovsky, whom he had left behind with supreme command. He sealed his letters with an attractive seal, the figure of himself, an artisan surrounded by tools, with the legend *Myself a pupil ; I seek teachers*. This was the second of a series of interesting mottoes and devices of Peter's pleasing:

the first was that inscribed on the first medal ever struck in Russia—*We conquer by water and by fire.* On the reverse of this Azof medal Peter was described as Emperor of Muscovy.

The Tsar was at Libau, and there saw the open Baltic for the first time. Somewhat tiring of his companions, he now went ahead to Konigsberg by sea and sent the rest roundabout by land. In that way he got in a course of artillery practice before they arrived, put himself under Colonel von Sternfeldt, who gave him a certificate of proficiency couched in very flattering terms. The Prussians were extremely sensible. A few squabbles that took place were not allowed to interfere with a much-desired friendship. Frederick the Third of Brandenburg sought alliance with Muscovy for mutual defence. It was a little difficult to understand the manners and ways of the potentate, but he must be humoured.

Peter took offence at the conceited gait of the fortress sentries and made one of his soldiers pick a quarrel with a German and fight him. This caused much ill-feeling, but was at once hushed up. The Tsar might not have objected if they had taken his soldier and broken him on the wheel. His blood craved to see some torture, and he was annoyed that no criminal worthy of extreme punishment could be found at the time. He and his batman Menshikof went about Konigsberg making mischief. But the Prussians were always obedient to orders and had been ordered to be polite.

Then there were great drinking bouts. Peter invited the notables to feast with him, and having them all at table, posted sentries at the doors to stop any guests from departing before they had drunk the wine in the great stoups, each containing the measure of four pots. The Chancellor, who was present,

excused himself. Peter, greatly enraged, took him by the arm, led him to a door and thrust him outside, and at once sent a courier to the Elector complaining of the indolence of his Minister.

The young Peter, drunk, pop-eyed, making dreadful faces, roaring, slashing about at random with his sword, was a fearsome host. Any man he liked he kissed, any woman he unlaced. Anyone who enraged him he struck a fearful buffet. His head had now a very unpleasant nervous shake. His eyes were roaming, flashing, audacious, full of inventiveness and wild humour, or else full of adventurous cruelty, vengeful, implacable. His " cats' whiskers " bristled over a full, sensual mouth of extraordinary coarseness. His giant frame brooded over his guests at table like a vulture among lesser birds. But he did not brood over his wine. He was wildly restless, inventive, unexpected. No one knew what would be his next action, but except for his cronies all learned to be apprehensive. But even Lefort himself got a sword-wound from Peter at table here. Peter begged forgiveness. Lefort bared his innocent breast and asked for death. The story of the Tsar's sorrow for this blow is told with much sentimental detail, with dialogue invented long afterwards. But whatever it was they said they said it in either bad Dutch or bad Russian, with expletives and maudlin kisses.

Yet Peter was in no respect a sot. There was always a cool reason and a wily mind under the cloak of madness and ferocity. He lingered at Konigsberg, not for its pleasures, but for news of how things went in Poland. He was corresponding weightily with Augustus and was even instructing Romodanovsky to move up to the frontier with troops in case the party of Conti and the French alliance should win. Once the news came that Augustus had gained the

day he hastened away. He would probably have gone direct to Holland by sea, but there was a French squadron entering the Baltic bearing belatedly the Prince of Conti to Poland. Peter must avoid being captured by the French. So he sailed away to Colberg near the mouth of the Oder. Thence he proceeded by road, canal, and river across northern Germany, sending Lefort and Golovin to Berlin. He visited the iron works in the Hartz mountains, climbed the Brocken; then he entered Hanover and accepted an invitation of Sophia of Hanover and her daughter Sophia Charlotte. Here he hugged young George, afterwards George the Second of England, and ruffled the headdress of a girl who was destined to be the mother of Frederick the Great.

Lefort and the others had by that time joined him again. They all danced and chattered in bits of languages. The Tsar was in a good humour. Every one was better behaved than at Konigsberg. Germany had civilised them a little. They, however, brought four dwarfs with them, and Lefort brought his orchestra. The Tsar confessed he did not care much for music, but it was clear that Lefort was passionately fond of music of a kind. But Peter showed everyone how to play the drum. That was an art he understood extremely well. The German princesses were agreeably surprised. Peter was quite charming with them and did not get drunk till they had retired for the night.

The Tsar then rode on to the Rhine. There he selected ten of his companions and sailed by the river and later by canal to Amsterdam. In Holland he preserved a strict incognito. Peter Mikhailof intended to work: his real business was to hand.

XV

Before leaving Russia Peter had sent twenty-eight young men from his rather idle aristocracy to learn whatever they could in Venice, and another score to England and Holland. They had all to learn ship-building and navigation, and if they returned without leave or without testimonials, their property was to be confiscated. The main object of the princes who accompanied him to Holland was also education. By this it may be understood that the wild young Tsar was not merely riding a hobby to death. The profound and praiseworthy motive of the service of his country reigned in his mind. Yet this service did not spring from conscious love of Russia. He almost despised his own people and would have preferred to be a Dutchman. He worked, as it were, with a blind will.

He was without doubt the greatest monarch in modern history. Napoleon rose from the ranks, but Peter voluntarily went down to the ranks. That was greater. "Peter, do this; Peter, do that," says the shipwright on the Buitenzaan, and the most terrible autocrat in the world meekly does as he is bid. There was no humbug about his Dutch apprenticeship. He passionately desired to be a workman in the yards, and he was one, dressed like one, lodged like one, worked like one. He took the utmost pains to preserve his incognito.

Something of his joy when he first saw Archangel was repeated when he got to Zaandam. He jumped

from the boat and moored it himself to the quay.[1] There were fifty wharves there, and he ran about the shipyards like a delighted schoolboy. He lodged in a little house with a working-man. He dashed out into the town and bought himself a bag of carpenter's tools. He hired himself out to work at once.

When his identity was discovered and the crowds began to annoy him, he quitted Zaandam and went to work in the docks of the East India Company, where he could be more free of annoyance.[2] He and his suite all got themselves Dutch clothes. No doubt Peter was difficult to hide in any clothes. The story is told of some foolish workman who came up to him and stared at him as if he were a museum specimen. The Tsar knocked him down on the spot. " Hey, hey, Marzen," his comrades said, " you've been knighted." Marzen picked himself up ruefully, but did not try an exchange of blows. He was called " The Knight " for the rest of his life.

It would be a mistake to overlook the fact that several vessels and a great deal of equipment had been ordered in Holland for Archangel. There was ample protection for the Russians. Witzen, the Burgomaster, at least grasped that a great customer had arrived. Peter might live simply, but he had large sums at his disposal, as was soon manifest by the purchases he made and the orders he gave. Witzen gave strict injunctions that no one should embarrass the distinguished strangers who wished to preserve their incognito. The East India Company laid down a frigate for Peter at once, and he got to work on it. That was what he most ardently desired.

Peter and " Alexasha " (Menshikof) worked on this vessel until it was completed. It was little more than carpentering—carpentering with more and better

[1] 8th August. [2] 16th August.

tools. Peter was not satisfied. He wished to create—did not wish to carry out always other men's plans, or for ever to copy models. So he took lessons in designing. He filled a great many notebooks. But he discovered that in shipbuilding the Dutch were unoriginal. They worked from models. New types of construction did not originate there, but in England. The principles taught were principles in copying. Each model had to be studied individually, and it would take years to gain a wide knowledge. When he learned that in the British yards shipbuilding was done from first principles, controlled by mathematical theory and not by models, his interest in Dutch craft vanished. Indeed, although he and his comrades worked without remission in the docks, Peter's interest relaxed and became divided. The Government, to beguile him, built him an observatory, and he took instruction there from an astronomer. That, too, was important in navigation. He then deserted the shipyards to make a study of the works at the junctions of rivers, the dams, canals, bridges—for he had a fantastic idea of forcing his subjects to join the Caspian to the Black Sea by canal when he got back to Russia. He visited factories, workshops, hospitals, and schools. He took great interest in surgery, being fascinated by blood. He carved up bodies under the instruction of Dr. Ruish. Some of his Russian companions seemed squeamish when they saw the gruesome sights in the anatomical museum, and Peter characteristically made them bite through the muscles of a few corpses. His burlesque humour did not desert him. Even on serious business his pet dwarfs and fools often had to follow him. A fearsome zest was given to his idea of brutal fun by a freak dentist who could take out a tooth with a sabre or a pick. The Tsar's fancy was taken; he began removing the

bad teeth of his Russian friends, and then, monstrously, some of the sound ones too.

Otherwise he was plain Peterbas, Master Peter, and on anyone who called him " Your Majesty " he turned his back. He identified himself with the habits of the common people, drank vast quantities of beer, lived in little houses, made his own fire in the morning, slept with a fat servant-girl, was up at dawn, and had an absolute passion for work and for doing things with his hands.

The other important aspect of his mission was the gathering of useful men who could be hired to go to Russia. In that, of course, Lefort, Golovin, and Voznitsin, the nominal heads of the delegation, did more than he. Peter's mind was obsessed with the desire to make Russia a great naval Power. With a great new fleet he would drive the Turks from the Black Sea, take Constantinople, and rescue the Holy Places. In all this time, despite his godlessness in private life, he saw himself as the champion of Christendom. As he wrote to the Patriarch Adrian:—

> " We are in the Netherlands in good health and following God's word, thanks to God's blessing and your prayers. Being of Adam's line, we labour. We do not work of necessity but of good will for the sake of our sea routes, in order that, having complete experience, we can, in the name of Jesus Christ, be conquerors, and liberators of the Christians. That, till my last breath, I shall not cease to desire."

XVI

The Tsar met the King of England, William of Orange, at Utrecht. The only other person present was Lefort. William no doubt was flattered by the Muscovite's predilection for Dutchmen and Dutch civilisation. There was little political interest in the meeting, for Russia counted then for little, either commercially or as a military power. But a mass of stories concerning Peter's doings now served for small talk in Western Europe. The epithet "fabulous" was already applied to him, and an inordinate curiosity to look upon him had been born. William gave a warm invitation to the Russians to come to London, and when the time came and the Tsar was ready, sent a dignified convoy and escort in the shape of three men of war. On the 10th of January they lay off Greenwich,[1] and the eager, questioning Tsar saw from the deck his choice of scene for his next activities, the wharves of Deptford.

He then stepped into a boat, and with some others, including Lord Carmarthen, was rowed to Charing Cross. Whereupon they clambered up the steps and took lodging at 15, Buckingham Street. Peter and the King exchanged visits. He was treated much as we would treat the Ameer of Afghanistan in our days —humoured, flattered, not chased by journalists and snapshot-men, but beset with crowds of the curious. Those accompanying the Tsar were still dressed in Oriental magnificence, perhaps a little tarnished.

[1] 10th January.

The historian says mockingly that they dropped vermin and pearls as they walked! But Peter, as before, was dressed sombrely and still strove to pass as one in his own retinue. This modesty and simplicity on his part was a habit of long standing, but it also appealed to his economical mind. He was a man who would spend a great deal on something useful, but as little as possible upon luxury. Elegant London was annoyed with him, and the shopkeepers were shocked. He was reputed to have Fortunatus' purse, but he kept the purse shut. His English mistress, an actress, reported that he was very shabby. The Tsar said that for what she gave she was paid handsomely. He considered it a shame to lavish money upon women, and in later years instituted a tariff in his army, three farthings for an embrace. Even in feasting, though he ate and drank prodigiously, the Tsar was careful of expense, and grumbled a great deal when prices seemed excessive. A bill which shows the moderate cost of living in those days is preserved. It shows also the extent of the appetite of the Russians. On a trip to Portsmouth the Tsar stopped at Godalming, and was charged one pound for supper, bed, and breakfast.

There were thirteen sat at table, and eight servants, twenty-one in all. They had for supper "five ribs of beef weighing three stone, one sheep weighing fifty-six pounds, three-quarters of a lamb, a shoulder roasted and a loyn of veal trussed with bacon, eight pullets, four couple rabbits, three dozen of sack, one dozen of claret, and bread and beer proportionable, also before going to bed six quarts of mulled sack."

They had seven dozen eggs with salad sent up to their bedrooms before breakfast. For breakfast they had half a sheep, nineteen pounds of lamb, ten pullets, one dozen chickens, three quarts of brandy.

So it appears in the heraldic records of Peter le Neve, Norroy King of Arms. The eating and drinking seem Gargantuan. But whoever was accommodated at Godalming for less!

The Tsar, secreted in the roof of the House of Lords, watched the ceremony of William giving royal assent to the Bill for the new land tax whereby a revenue of a million and a half was to be raised. It is said that he was greatly astonished that it was possible to obtain such large amounts by constitutional means when he, with the utmost difficulty, could glean but half that amount by a year's taxing.

The financial problem had presented itself to Peter's mind. On this journey to the West he had incurred expenses amounting to two and a half million roubles, and he had committed his country to large payments in salaries to the new men he was sending over. His great schemes for the future also entailed an expenditure as yet unheard of in the history of Russia. One can imagine the plight of the thousand foreigners engaged at high salaries and sent to Russia, supposing the new rebellion of the Strieltsi, then unknown to Peter but developing in his absence, had succeeded.

Peter, casting about for a little extra money, sold to Lord Carmarthen for twenty thousand pounds a licence to import tobacco into Russia, the whole sum being paid in advance. As the Orthodox Church still forbade the use of tobacco, this deal was greatly commented upon, as it seemed to place the Tsar's authority as higher than that of the Patriarch. Peter said briefly that tobacco was none of the Church's business, and that if he wished it his subjects should smoke as he did. The Tsar also won five hundred guineas matching one of his soldiers in a boxing match with an English pugilist. But one neither finds Peter

betting at horse-races nor playing cards. He hated cards.

Russians have an extraordinary capacity for feeling themselves happy in England. Peter and his suite were not exceptions. The English butler might consider them "right nasty," but there is no doubt they made themselves at home in London, liked the rough beer-drinking habits of the people and the sportsmanship and heavy drinking of the gentry. There was no dearth in four-bottle men, and Lord Carmarthen, who was one of their intimates, was one of the great topers of his day.

It was unfortunate that Peter did not lodge with a dockyard worker at Deptford. The way he and his companions treated John Evelyn's house shows that for them a house was merely a house. They had no respect for furnishing or fittings, or for the pride of a fine house, its lawns, gardens, holly hedges.

Evelyn had let his house to Admiral Benbow, who in turn sub-let it to the Russians. It was within a stone's throw of the river and admirably placed for one interested in the King's Yard. Peter took serious instruction in English shipbuilding and worked as hard as ever, and caroused as hard as ever. He and his friends made Sayes Court a rough house. Some notion of the boisterous high jinks that took place may be obtained from considering the damage done. They broke three hundred panes of glass. They had burst or prised open the brass locks of twelve doors. They had blown up the kitchen floor. They had used the posts and fencing of the garden for firewood. They had got some of the Dutch tiles hacked out of the chimney corners. They broke the grates and twisted the fire-irons. They "damnified" the inlaid tables and dirtied the Turkish carpet. They smashed twenty-one pictures. They cut up the dressers and

several doors. They covered the parlour floor with grease and ink; broke walnut tables and stands. They seem to have had wild games in the beds, tearing up the feather beds, ripping the sheets, tearing canopies to pieces and ruining precious silk counterpanes. Many things were lost. They evidently stole Admiral Benbow's charts and designs.

One can imagine how little the head gardener appreciated his "Zarrish Majestie," as he called him. For the bowling-green had been ruined by acrobatics, the flower-plots overgrown with weeds, the branches of the fruit-trees broken. Three large wheelbarrows had been destroyed. The Tsar amused himself "breaching my close hedge of glittering holly." The way he did this was to seat himself in a wheelbarrow and be driven head-first at full speed against the holly hedge. This was evidently a pet diversion of Peter's, an innocent school-boy pleasure of a man of twenty-six years.

When William came down to Sayes Court to see them, the servants had hard work putting one room into a state of decency to receive him. But Peter and he were hail-fellow-well-met. Here was another jolly Dutchman in another Preobrazhenskoe. The two monarchs could drink together, and had no need of Ministers of State to guide their friendship.

The King was generous. He gave Peter his best yacht, the *Royal Standard*, a beautiful ship with twenty brass cannon. The Tsar's great pleasure had a practical side. He manned it with capable British sailors, and put aboard hired naval officers—gunners, artisans, surgeons—and arranged for them to sail to Archangel as soon as the northern ice had melted.

In return, at parting Peter is supposed to have presented William with a large uncut diamond, no

doubt less valuable than the yacht. But Peter did not make costly presents; he needed all the wealth he could get for the realisation of his plans.

A further courtesy is recorded. The University of Oxford bestowed on him an honorary degree of Doctor of Law—perhaps because he was above the law. He was reputed to have said that there were a few lawyers left in his country, and when he got back he intended to have them hanged—probably a witty invention of the time. In the coffee-houses they must say something.

At the other end of town one finds a different assumption of Peter's character. The Tsar's curiosity led him to visit the Quakers several times in their meeting-houses at Deptford. He evidently impressed William Penn as a power in Christendom. Penn wrote him a long letter which began in this way:—

> "It was a profound respect and not a vain curiosity, great Czar, which brought me twice to wait upon thee. My desire was, and is, that as God Almighty has distinguished thee above so many millions of thy fellow-creatures, so thou mayest distinguish thyself above them by an extraordinary zeal for piety and charity, which are the two legs the Christian religion stands upon; and when they are wanting or defective it must needs fall in the streets to the scorn and the triumph of the heathen. . . ."

In Quakerism Peter found the completest denial of the forms and rituals and ikon-worship of the Orthodox Church. It was impossible to say that he ever became a Christian in Penn's sense, but he was hostile to a great deal in Orthodoxy. He was by temperament a Protestant. He did not enjoy

the Archbishop of Canterbury as much as he did Penn.

However, mechanics, shipbuilding, and Government interested him much more than religion. England had helped him in three departments. On the 21st April he returned to Holland.

XVII

PETER had been away from Russia a year, collecting men, knowledge, instruments, and books. The King's largesse was particularly acceptable, and the *Royal Standard* went to Russia laden with the treasure of civilisation. The Dutch frigate which Peter had built in Amsterdam proceeded to Archangel with similar cargo. The Tsar was not embarrassed by baggage or by new retainers. He still had funds at his disposal, and only thought of extending his travel.

He still had hopes of realising an illusory project—the forming of a militant alliance of European Powers against the Turk. Nothing came of that, and his will was switched on to something entirely different when he returned to Russia. But for the time being he was a champion of Christendom, and with some *naïveté* entertained a certain faith in the willing co-operation of princes and powers. At Vienna he was destined to receive a notable rebuff. As at Riga a year before, the Government thought it prudent to accept his incognito, and proceeded to deal with his embassy on the assumption of his absence.

Such absurd situations as the following arose. The Emperor Leopold invited Lefort and the others to a sumptuous dinner. Peter stood behind Lefort's chair. The wine was so good that Lefort asked permission to allow his colleague to taste it. No one raised an eyebrow. Luckily Peter's sense of humour was unbounded even when the joke seemed against him.

Austria was about to conclude peace with Turkey.

She foresaw the War of the Spanish Succession and the need to oppose undivided forces against France. Property and heritage meant more than the Crusade. Peter, destined to be the great reformer of his country, was at this time on a mission which was mediæval and Byzantine.

The Russians were beginning to look most shabby and travel-stained. The Imperial Court was willing to make them a large grant, a thousand guldens a day, but Peter regarded that as unnecessary extravagance, and limited the extent of his host's generosity to something less than half that amount.

Peter and Leopold met at last, but did not understand one another. The Emperor treated him as a person of slight significance. There were some festivities—fireworks and dance, feasting and flirting, but the Tsar saw he was wasting time, and prepared to go to Venice and resume his studies in the construction of galleys.[1]

But he had already been too long absent from Moscow. His letters had been delayed in transit. Vinius and Romodanovsky wrote nervously. Rumour was busy in Muscovy. The Tsar had gone away to strange parts and might never return. Discontent was raising its many heads. Conspirators had dug a passage underground and reached the cell of the ex-Regent Sophia inside that convent where she had been closely kept. It was said that the boyards wished to strangle Peter's son Alexis, it was said that that was already done. The Old Believers once more were hurling anathemas against Antichrist. And the Strieltsi were insubordinate.

Gordon had had a successful campaign against the returning Moslems in the south. Azof was newly fortified; the foundations of Taganrog were laid.

[1] 16th July.

But the Strieltsi were not allowed back to Moscow, where were their houses, wives and families, communal estates and interest. Peter, distrusting them, had arranged that they should be kept far from the capital: now on the banks of the Sea of Azof, now with Romodanovsky on the Polish and Lithuanian frontiers. Moscow was protected by Lefort's regiment and the old amusement corps of Preobrazhenskoe. The Strieltsi came gradually to regard themselves as Sophia's army. They deserted from their distant stations and turned up without leave in Moscow, complaining that they were neither properly fed nor paid.

Gordon treated the insurgents with a clemency which showed him less cruel and ferocious than his friends and masters. But parleying and the offering of decent terms only had the effect of encouraging revolt. Attempts to cleanse the ranks of mutineers were frustrated by force. The Strieltsi, unsure of themselves but gathering courage as they went, began to march upon Moscow. There was great alarm in the city. Merchants packed up their goods and removed to obscure villages. A sack of the town was feared. The mutineers mustered outside Moscow and then sent couriers summoning to their aid all those stationed in the south. Gordon was then forced to give battle. They were a large, leaderless mob, and were completely routed. Many were killed, many wounded. And the prisoners, put to the torture, made confessions. Many were hanged by the side of the highway, and the rest were banished to distant parts.

Peter received the news on the 16th July, and decided to cancel his proposed visit to Venice. He was greatly enraged, and considered that the mutineers had been let off too lightly. The spirit of insur-

rection must be quelled in a much more dreadful way. "The seed of Miloslavsky is shooting again. I ask you to take strong measures," he wrote to Romodanovsky. The Tsar turned his steps homeward.

In all this time of absence he never corresponded with his wife, and in brooding on the elements of revolt his mind probably focussed upon the kindred of Eudoxia. They were not mentioned by Vinius or Romodanovsky as having taken part in the movement, but the Tsar's mind hardened against the Tsaritsa. He did not wish in any case to be further bothered with her, and one of his first acts upon reaching home was to send two soldiers and a cab and have her removed to a convent. That done, he had no obligation towards her. He was more free to do as he wished in the Kremlin, and the Lopukhin family were definitely removed from favour.

Peter went straight to his old mistress, Fraulein Mons, taking Lefort along with him to Preobrazhenskoe, where, in his old quarters, he spent the night.[1] It is surmised that on this night together with the Genevan he planned his appalling vengeance upon the mutineers and their fellow-Strieltsi.

[1] 25th August.

XVIII

THE next morning after his arrival [1] Peter with his own hands cut off the beards of Romodanovsky and Shein. The Tsar held informal court—for everyone of any importance flocked to Preobrazhenskoe—and he had a long day with the shears, for he cut off nearly every man's beard. Two ancients alone were permitted to retain their beards, Tikhon Streshnef and Michael Cherkasky.

At the next feast which was given by General Shein anyone so unfashionable as to appear unshaved was handed over to the burlesque attention of a Court fool, who, armed with scissors and razor and holding the bearded noble by the nose, performed the barber's rite to a chorus of ribald mirth.

Barbers were posted at the gates of Moscow, and likewise tailors. All male visitors to the city were compulsorily shaved and measured for a German suit of clothes. Beards became illegal, but later could be worn after payment of a tax, in which case the licence had to be attached to the beard. It was generally a disc with a picture of a beard and the words "Tax paid." And not only the time-serving gentry became beardless, but also great numbers of peasants and workmen who set great store by their hair. These saved their beards and wore them under their coats together with their crosses and body-ikons, for on the Last Day they believed they would have to give account for their beards. The Church steadfastly

[1] 26th August.

opposed the barber. But Peter ridiculed opposition, and endeavoured to get rid of all beards. It is said maliciously that was partly because his own would not grow.

But in truth the attack on beards and clothes was Peter's direct answer to the conservative element in Russian politics. It had proclaimed beard-shaving to be a wicked heretical novelty. The pictures of the Saints were till that time the fashion-plates of Russian

MEDALS WORN TO SHOW RIGHT TO HAVE A BEARD

men. All imitated the ikons. Almost all Russians resented the changes to Westernism. The foreigners swarming in at Peter's hire were detested, and there was in truth very considerable civil backing for the insurrection of the Strieltsi.

The beard-cutting, trivial and amusing as it may seem now, was actually a terrible act of aggression, a blow in the face for the whole nation of Old Russia. By itself this outrage might have roused great forces of revolt, but before the people recovered from its amazement the dreadful vengeance upon the Strieltsi was begun. All the mutineers who had been

banished were brought back for torture, some seventeen hundred men.[1]

Peter had had eighteen months holiday from torturing, which, if a police method, Moscow's "Third Degree," was also a vice and a personal diversion. The Tsar in the West felt ashamed of these practices, and was confused when Jacob Bruce appeared in Amsterdam with the marks of fire on his body, having been tortured for fun after a dinner-party at Preobrazhenskoe. Romodanovsky received a reprimand. But the demon in Peter only dreamed and waited; it was not exorcised by Western civilisation.

The fourteen torture-chambers of Preobrazhenskoe were filled with victims,[2] and their screams and groans continued day and night for a long while. The unfortunate soldiers were tied to poles and roasted over slow fires till they "confessed" something that seemed adequate inculpation. If several independently confessed the same thing it was considered confirmed. In this way the complicity of Sophia with the mutineers seemed to be established.

Curiously enough, the Tsar neither caused his sister to be tortured nor to be executed. It seems that only rarely were the rigours of the law applied to women. Peter visited the convent and cross-questioned Sophia, but his only punishment of her was to have her shorn and put under a more vigilant military guard. He decided also to treat his wife Eudoxia in the same way. She also was shorn, and entered the close confinement of an ascetic sisterhood under the name of Helen. Her son Alexis was taken from her. The Tsarevitch, now eight years old, was strongly under the influence of his mother, Byzantine tradition, and religion, by no means like his father either in temperament or capacity. The Tsar had not up to this point shown

[1] 15th September. [2] 17th September.

much interest in him. Peter's sister Natalia now took charge of him.

Fraulein Mons, the wine-merchant's daughter, beguiled the Tsar at night after his frantic pre-occupation in the torture-chamber. But he was in an evil mood, gloomy, irritable, subject to violent frenzies. At the many feasts he was morose and often unable to give himself up to the spirit of folly. Sudden rages would possess him; his face would undergo awful contortions, he would raise his sword and slash at random at the company, only restrained by Lefort. The arrival of a consignment of Carmarthen's tobacco was fêted by all the clowns and the mock Patriarch. Dishes with smouldering tobacco were carried in parade. Venus and Bacchus received libations, cannon were fired—but the Tsar could not shake off the gloom of his own cruelty and insensate revenge. His rage against the Strieltsi overflowed on to those near him in sword cuts, buffets, and threats. He began to nurse a cudgel in his hands and belabour anyone who crossed him. Only rarely his sense of humour awoke and saved someone from his wrath. The cleverest of his favourites, " Alexasha " Menshikof, crossed the Tsar one day, and Peter flew at his crony. " I'll make you again what you were," said he. " Go, get your panniers again and wander round the camps and the streets selling pies! " Menshikof was clever enough to make a joke of it, came in with panniers slung from his shoulders and cried out all over the Court, " Pies, hot pies! " and pointed to himself and remarked with mocking classicism, " Remember Alexander."

This anecdote is told of " Alexasha " Menshikof as relating to a later date, and yet whenever the Tsar was moody or spiteful he was apt to fling the epithet " pie-merchant " at him.

Lefort had more power of restraint, perhaps because he never indulged in torturing and could not be persuaded to wield the executioner's axe. He succeeded in taking himself seriously as a Western European, if not in taming the barbaric master he served and influenced. Even Lefort Peter kicked around the floor.

Every one of the seventeen hundred was put to the torture and sometimes put several times to the torture. Nearly a score of torture fires were burning at the same time. The wives and children of the victims were all about. Their sobs rent the air. Carpenters were busy at the city gates erecting impressive gallows for the coming executions. The old Patriarch came interceding with hymns and prayers, but the Tsar sent him about his business. What the Tsar was doing might be more acceptable to God than the foolish interference of the Patriarch. The old Russia, used to horrors, was stunned by the new terror, in contrast to which even the doings of Ivan the Terrible paled.

The mutilated prisoners were brought in carts to Moscow to their death.[1] They were seated in twos, and carried lighted candles in their hands. Following the doleful procession was the endless lamentation of the women and children. They reached the Pokrovsky Gate of the city. And who was the tall headsman leaning on his axe, this giant at the scaffold? It was not a sovereign seeking popularity. The executioner was Peter himself, who on the first day of the executions struck off two hundred heads with his own axe.[2] But the other great men of the day shall take exercise. There are many more to be killed. Death's larger harvest is to come. Romodanovsky has to wield the axe. Boris Golitsin, through inexpertness, made a bad mess of his job, hewing away at

[1] 30th September. [2] 17th October.

soldiers' necks. Peter on horseback looked on, and was very angry when any noble blenched from the bloody task given him of hewing off the heads of the condemned.

The ex-Regent Sophia, now called the nun Susannah, wakened one morning to see the faces of three corpses hung at her little window, obscuring the light, and holding mock petitions up to her. Altogether a hundred and ninety-five Strieltsi were hanged in the convent yard, and the bodies were to remain there five months. For five months the corpses held their mock petitions at the window of her cell.

Wheels were mounted on pillars in the Red Square, and those accused of being ringleaders of revolt and of robbery had their arms and legs broken, and hung moaning on the wheels for days.

Two regimental priests also were executed; one hanged, the other beheaded, his head put on a stake and his body fixed in one of the wheels.

For five months a thousand corpses infected the Moscow air and testified to the revenge of Peter the Great. The overgrown boy romping in a wheelbarrow in John Evelyn's garden in the spring is the most ruthless potentate in the autumn. It is not surprising that at this time a pretender appeared in Russia, giving himself out to be the real Peter Alexeef, the carpenter Tsar, and obtained a following. The sovereign who had returned from the West was more terrible than the young democratic Tsar who had left. The superstitious in Russia spread a story that Peter was in prison in Germany, and that the Devil had come in his guise to Russia to usurp his throne, cut off the holy beards, and ruin the people. He was to be seen with smoke coming out of his mouth. All his favourite accomplices had smoke coming out of

their mouths. The hideous rumour welled out from Moscow over the country.

Peter, however, was indifferent to gossip. His vengeance accomplished, he reverted to normal, and set out in a matter-of-fact way to inspect his fleet at Voronezh.[1]

[1] 23rd October.

XIX

When the news of the Moscow executions reached the troops stationed at Azof there were mutinies there. There were mutinies also among the soldiers in the West, and universal resentment. All through the dreadful winter of 1698–1699 the torture-chambers were occupied, and Peter in his spare time went on hewing off heads. He began to be feared as no one had been feared in Russia for a long space of time. He was also hated. No one in the realm except his sycophants approved of him. Many hoped that he would soon die, and they began to look forward to a milder, better Tsar in the person of the little heir Alexis.

But unpopularity neither increased nor decreased the ferocity of the Tsar. His will did not waver, neither did his personality alter. He throve in an atmosphere of fear, cruelty, and burlesque mirth. Screams mingled with his dance orchestra. He could feast while the air was heavy with the odour of his dead. He had no evil conscience. On the contrary, he had a sense of virtue and God-serviceableness which nothing could shake. He abhorred the appearance and style of the Russia which it had been given him to rule. He took it as a divine mission to alter that appearance and style. His taste must be God's.

Peter and his nobles, generals, and admirals sit around, smoking Dutch clay pipes. For a reason that is obscure this is regarded not merely as a pernicious vice, but as deadly sin. It is personal defilement, a

corruption of the sacred breath of life, a sacrifice of the dignity of the "heirs of Christ." In the last respect it is a kindred sin to that of shaving, which "makes men look like apes." Both smoking and shaving are characteristics of the heretics of the West.

Then the nobles shall wear wigs.[1] The Court shall be German in style. At a great banquet in carnival time Peter, armed with scissors, strips and cuts away the ample pleated sleeves of the guests. Whoever comes to Court clad as a Russian becomes a laughing-stock, and if he persists in the old fashion is liable to the attentions of Romodanovsky and his inquisitors. All men shall be Germans; to be Russian is to be ridiculous.

One of the fools has chosen a bride. This is an opportunity for a burlesque parade. Peter orders that all the costumes shall be those of a hundred years before. It is a public mockery of "the good old days," with an absurd Patriarch and an even more absurd mock Tsar, dressed up in the most pretentious, most inconvenient, antique attire. At the banquet cats' flesh and dogs' flesh are served, and wine so bad that no one can drink it.

This is largely whim on Peter's part. He thinks foreigners are better than Russians. His motive is youthful prejudice. The reforms which he made later in life were due more to his actual plans for the country and to his need to organise the means of raising a large revenue. The West has made a strong impression upon him, and he believes that by act of will and through implicit obedience to his command he can make Russia Western. There are no limits to the possibilities of obedience. In Peter the sense of autocracy and power was greater than in any other potentate in history. He says, "Build a fleet," and they

[1] 1st February.

build it. He says, "Build me a new capital on the marshes of the Neva," and they build it. He says to thousands of families, "Be removed to the south," and they pack up and trek for the new territories. Later in life he was about to order all the population in outlying districts to remove to the centre, but fortunately his death intervened. His "Cut off your beards" was utterly characteristic of his sense of autocracy.

But the whim of Peter was epochal as well as personal. The last year of the seventeenth century had come. *Fin de siècle* feeling was not embodied in the Tsar alone. In Russia the Middle Ages had been unduly prolonged, and the new autocrat had the impulse to close the book. Russia was to have a Year One of modern life. It was for that reason that Peter decided to change the old calendar. In Russia they counted the years from the foundation of the world by God. God had made the world in September, the great seeding time of the year. But Peter decided to join the West, and count from the birth of Christ. New Year's Day was ordered to be kept next January 1st.

Opposition to these changes and innovations, dress, tobacco, beards, and calendar, was vast but feeble. For the monarch's will was enforced by terror. Wherever he went throughout the country there was hidden consternation. This was especially true of his journeys to Voronezh and back. The provincials who had not cut their beards were afraid to show themselves. There was no evasion possible for the carpenters at the docks; they had to conform or bare their backs to the knout. They tied up their shorn beards and wore them under their blouses, so that when they died and were asked by God to account for their beards they could do so. The Deptford and

Amsterdam heretics had arrived, and the Russians had to make themselves look as much like them as possible. But they took precautions for salvation.

A new big ship built by the foreigners rose on the stocks, and the Tsar called it the *God's Providence*. He paid attention not only to the appearance of his workmen, but took their work in hand, teaching them what he had learned abroad, showing the way to use the new tools and a hundred improvements. He increased the numbers employed; he made everyone work. He still dreamed of new war with Turkey, and such a fleet as must inspire awe at the Levant soon rose on the banks of the Voronezh River.

There was only one personal interruption of these preparations: that was the wholly unexpected death of Lefort.[1] Peter rushed back from Voronezh by forced stages. There had been one of the customary drinking bouts following a banquet given to the envoys of the Elector of Brandenburg and the King of Denmark. Lefort, who had been drinking heavily, forsook the banquet-hall to go out and drink under the stars. It was very cold and he took a chill. On his deathbed he had his favourite band play to him. He wished to hear orchestral symphony till his last breath. Peter was almost as much shaken as he had been by his mother's death, and shed copious tears, declaring that he had lost the only faithful man in his dominions. The Tsar exaggerated. He was bound to Lefort by sentimental ties. The Genevan was in no sense a great man, but he was serviceable and straightforward. He taught the Tsar to dance, he found him a mistress, he outdrank him, he invented new forms of burlesque mirth—and he had interpreted for him. His diplomatic work went for naught. All the Powers had deserted the cause of Peter, signing peace with the

[1] February.

Turks at Karlowitz in January—Austria, Venice, Poland making advantageous terms for themselves, but ignoring the cause of Russia. Thus it would seem that the grand mission to Europe which Lefort largely planned bore little or no fruit. As if by irony of Fate, Sweden alone sent military aid to the Tsar upon his new adventures.

But the new fleet sailed in the spring. Peter staged his first sham fight at Taganrog. The enemy entered into parley; there was no new war. The Sultan trembled, seeing a fine new Russian ship come to anchor at Constantinople. The Turks were angry with England and Holland for allowing their sailors and captains to man the Russian fleet, and though the Sultan declared that he intended to keep the Black Sea as a virgin, pure and undefiled, he had at least to surrender the approaches to her virginity. It seems obvious that Peter was strong enough to have gained complete control of the Sea, but some lack of fixity of purpose manifested itself.

In September he was back again in Moscow. His active enthusiasm was not now engaged upon the Black Sea. He intended at all hazard to close the Byzantine struggle with the century. The crusade against the Moslem was too Oriental and obscure for his Western ambitions. Certainly a project of a very different nature had now begun to interest him. That project was the conquest of the Baltic. Sweden stood in his way, and no matter how friendly and helpful Sweden might be at the moment he intended to oust her from the southern Baltic.

It is surmised that while sojourning at Rava on his return journey from Western Europe he discussed plans for this coming war with the new King of Poland, his friend and nominee, Augustus the Second, Poland, in the person of her king if not of her Parlia-

ment, was anxious to regain lost provinces and to have the generous co-operation of Russia.

In secret, Peter pretended never to forego his resentment at the cold treatment he had received from the Swedes in Riga. But the truth was, he coveted the inlets of the Northern Sea. With the help of Augustus of Poland and the Elector of Brandenburg, he intended to possess himself of these ports and start a new shipbuilding programme nearer the pattern of his ambitions.

So when he returned to Moscow from the Black Sea [1] it was to meet European conspirators and to conclude a new military alliance. At Preobrazhenskoe he entertained the Livonian firebrand, von Patkul, representative of the insurgent Baltic landowners. Patkul was under sentence of death from Sweden, and full of fire and hate. With him came General Karlowic, emissary of Augustus. The Polish King had made alliance with the King of Denmark against Sweden. Russia was necessary. If she came in the war could begin at once. Patkul was incognito and was not identified by the Swedes in Moscow. Sweden indeed did not suspect the existence of the conspiracy against her.

In the parleyings with Peter, Patkul was the leader, but he entirely misunderstood the character of the man with whom he was dealing. He wished the aid of Russia, but shuddered to think of Russia in control of Livonia. His idea was to put Peter off with the promise of Ingria and Karelia, a region of forests and swamps.

The conversations took place at Preobrazhenskoe, Peter living in his little house in workman's garb. There was great eating, and some of the foreign cooks engaged in the West had to show their hands. Peter

[1] September.

chose to be simple if eccentric, with a greater passion for meat and drink than for anything else in the world. "What is the matter with you Poles," said he to Karlowic, "is that you do not eat enough. In Vienna I put on weight, but I lost it again coming through beggarly Poland." On a point of honour the Poles present claimed that they were quite fat. "Yes, but you got fat in Moscow, not at home," said Peter, laughing. The Tsar was much fonder of the German King of Poland than of the Poles themselves. But then, few Russians can tolerate Poles. The peace between the two countries was a mere political accident.

Patkul was alarmed by the torture, the floggings, and the executions at Preobrazhenskoe and by the Tsar's personal delight in hewing off heads. That would never do in Livonia. Peter, at all costs, must be persuaded to attack Sweden on the flank of his fatherland rather than directly via Riga and Narva. The insistence of the Tsar upon the supposed affront he had received at Riga seemed to him childish. But it was difficult to obtain the measure of Peter's intentions. No one understood that his drunken ferocity was equal to his cool intention.

In any case, he would not embark upon this Northern war till he had definitely concluded peace with Turkey. That seemed to be a firm resolve. It was unfortunate, because the boy-hero of Sweden was a swift-moving warrior, and even while they were parleying he was planning to march into Denmark and destroy one of Peter's potential allies.

At the same time Swedish delegates had arrived in Moscow seeking confirmation of all existing treaties between Sweden and Russia. Peter entertained them also, and smiled and promised. In short, he played a vile double rôle. On the 11th November the war

pact was signed, Augustus promising to attack through Livonia, Peter through Ingria and Karelia. Spies were at once sent out by the Tsar to find out what they could concerning fortifications and dispositions of troops. He agreed to attack as soon as peace was made with Turkey, but not before. Meanwhile he entertained the Swedes very pleasantly, and nine days later confirmed old treaties with them.[1]

Before the end of the month, to his great dismay, Peter lost Patrick Gordon.[2] The veteran general had felt his strength leaving him for some months. Russia would never allow him to go home to Scotland to end his life in peaceful retirement. Now he received a call which even the greatest of autocrats could not gainsay. His spirit returned to the heather and the glens.

Gordon was Peter's ablest soldier. His natural sagacity was aided by enormous experience of war. No one in the foreign service in Russia was capable of replacing him. The Tsar appreciated him as a soldier and would have used him against Sweden. But of course he appreciated him equally as a drinking companion and a reliable bulwark at table. Peter stood weeping by his bedside when he died.

There was a State funeral. The Scotsman's body was carried on the shoulders of twenty-eight colonels; his widow followed the bier supported on each side by a General. Twenty ladies of the highest families in Russia followed mourning behind her. The Tsar, the "King of Pressburg," Vinius, all were there, and likewise Swedish deputies, and conspirators in disguise, and envoys and ambassadors from many States. Roman Catholic clergy officiated, and Gordon's vault was set before the high altar of the first stone temple built by the Catholics in Moscow.

[1] 20th November. [2] 29th November.

XX

The new century was ushered in by Peter, who celebrated it with bigger and better fireworks. Rejoicings were commanded. For seven days all householders had to decorate the entrances to their homes with evergreens and keep bonfires going in their yards and fire tar barrels. Officers, merchants, and civil servants were obliged to equip themselves with small cannon or carbines, and, during the fire-work displays in the Red Square, give salvoes from their windows. Citizens also should send up rockets as answering fires to the Tsar's central pyrotechnics. Thus the New Year festival was inaugurated. Incidentally Russians had to accustom themselves to the fact that it was not the year 7208, but the year 1700.

Then began considerable confusion in accounts and dates. Peter had abolished the abacus without which, to this day, Russians remain very weak in simple arithmetic. The abacus soon came back, but the new calendar remained. In March there was a new coinage. Peter had determined to tax his people at least as efficiently as William of Orange did the British. But it was somewhat difficult because of the debased coinage. The silver coins in existence were sliced and cut and worn. Traders were using leather as a medium of exchange. Barter was universal. But with the help of his Dutchmen the Tsar instituted a mint, which during the year 1700 struck two million new coins. In planning the finances of future wars Peter had already thought of the treasures of the

monasteries and the revenues of the monks, which he considered in the nature of illicit gain. These should be used when need arose. Severe penalties were enacted against those who sliced or pared the new money. The reform was effective and at once beneficial. Trade, both internal and external, was steadily developing.

This year of bigger and better fireworks saw the outbreak of two great wars—the struggle against France called the War of the Spanish Succession, and the conflict of Peter and Charles the Twelfth of Sweden, sometimes called the Northern War. The latter was more important than the former, for though by defeat France was weakened, the defeat of Charles the Twelfth reduced Sweden to the position of a minor Power in Europe, and raised Russia to be the arbiter of Central European destinies.

Meanwhile the argument with Turkey lingered in a dozen peace conferences in which two groups of Orientals strove to bluff one another and failed. The Tsar occupied himself with home affairs, though chiefly with the accumulation of weapons and munitions. In this, despite all his foreign help, he seems to have been ill served. His artillery continued to be only a little more dangerous than his fireworks.

Peter would not move against the north till the Turks had signed peace. So Augustus the Second moved without him, but only as Elector of Saxony, not absolutely and freely as King of Poland. For the Polish nobles would not embark on the new war. Instead, they sent one Leshinsky to Constantinople to back up the Turks and actually offer them an alliance against Peter. Seventeen hundred Saxons took the field and marched into Livonia. There were also a small number of Polish troops. The objective was Riga, but the force was quite inadequate. Augustus

wrote from the front imploring help, but Peter replied, "If to-day the Turks make peace, to-morrow I declare war on Sweden."

There were rumours that the Tsar intended to attack Revel and Narva. But they did not gather force. Peter's real intentions remained inscrutable. Even his secret allies might have doubted his purpose. For his caution with regard to the pacified and baffled Turks seemed somewhat unwarranted—especially in the mind of such a fiery and hot-blooded monarch as Peter. But the caution was not simulated. In matters concerning his personal or national safety Peter was always cautious.

He contented himself with enforcing his new domestic reforms: Europeanising Moscow, emancipating the homes and especially the women from Tartar tradition. He feasted and romped at Preobrazhenskoe. He made one of his northern burlesques King of the Samoyedes, and the coronation of this Court fool was a spectacular parade, actual Samoyedes being commanded thither from the banks of the far Petchora with reindeer and gifts to pay homage to their imaginary sovereign. Peter also spent much time at Voronezh at his favourite hobbies of carpentering and shipbuilding.

At length the Turks agreed to an armistice of thirty years.[1] The fortifications on the Dnieper were to be raised. The Tsar's tenure of Azof, Taganrog, and Kerch was confirmed. Peter received the news with great joy, and proclaimed a fête in Moscow. There was another marvellous firework display. On the following day he gave orders to the Voivode of Novgorod to move forward against Narva with the troops at his disposal.

News travelled across Europe very slowly, and no

[1] 8th August.

one knew that the Danish ally in this northern war had been already put out of action. On the 13th of April Charles the Twelfth, then only eighteen years of age, set out from Sweden on his long military adventure which lasted almost the whole of his life. With fifteen thousand men he plunged into Denmark and appeared suddenly outside the gates of Copenhagen. Frederick the Fourth of Denmark in terror agreed to pay a huge indemnity and recognise the independence of Holstein. On the same day the Turks made peace with Peter, the Danes made peace with Charles. The boy hero then turned eastward to throw himself against his other enemies, at first to break them and ultimately to be broken by the greatest of them—Peter.

XXI

The preference which the Tsar had for foreigners was modified by his desire for a large army. If Russia was to have a large fighting force it obviously must be made up of Russians. The hiring of foreign mercenaries was expensive, and was beginning to be found ineffective in war. When in 1689 Prince Golitsin at the Regent Sophia's behest went to fight the Turks he led an army of one hundred and twelve thousand men in which there were sixty-three foreign regiments. But the dead, the crippled, and the prisoners of that unfortunate campaign were not replaced from abroad. When Peter went south with his army in 1695 on his first Azof campaign his forces were more national. The Preobrazhensky regiments and the Strieltsi were used, and they were almost exclusively Russian. Even then there were fourteen thousand foreign soldiers. But the large army, one hundred and twenty thousand men employed to make a diversion on the western flank, was exclusively Russian.

The gaps in the ranks of the foreign regiments were filled by peasant recruits from Russia. Volunteers were asked for, but not enough could be found. There was a round-up of peasant youth on the large estates; free peasants were conscripted. Landowners were obliged to part with a quota of serfs. Finally, any serf who ran from his master and joined the army was immune from punishment.

Up till that time the sons of nobles had served in

the ranks without humiliation, but the appearance of swarms of serfs made it necessary for them to take rank exclusively as officers. But the instruction of the recruits was largely in the hands of German and Scotch sergeants, who found great difficulty in coping with the rawness and stupidity of the peasants. They were not successful in converting the vast rabble into soldiers. To teach them left from right they tied hay to one leg and straw to another. Training was hurried and slipshod. As Charles the Twelfth said, you never could get near enough to kill the Russians: they fled upon such slight alarms.

Twenty-nine newly formed regiments, each of a thousand men, were included in the army that took the field against the Swedes. In all, there were between thirty-five thousand and forty thousand men in the northern army.

Charles brought his army over the sea intact, and landed at Pernau in the Gulf of Riga. Peter was distressed by the news, for he then understood that the Danes had been overcome. Still, he did not give up hopes of taking Narva; entrenched himself in front of the town, and commenced a bombardment. He held the rank of captain in his own army.

Von Patkul was apprehensive—not that Peter should lose, but that he should take Narva, from which he would not easily be dislodged. The Livonian thought that Peter should have been contented to try to conquer the marshy approaches to Lake Ladoga rather than the littoral of the Baltic. Still, the support of the Tsar was too valuable for him to quarrel with him openly.

But the Russians were ill equipped for fighting Europeans. They quickly fired off all their bombs and firepots and had to wait for fresh supplies from the interior. Boris Sheremetief was sent with six

thousand men east of Narva towards Wesenburg to reconnoitre. Charles the Twelfth, moving rapidly towards the Russians, came upon him in the pass of Pyhajoggi, eighteen miles from Narva.[1] Sheremetief naïvely informed the Swedish King that his road was barred, as the pass was already occupied. Charles opened fire unexpectedly with eight guns, and the Russians stampeded back to Peter and the main army.

The story which Sheremetief brought frightened Peter. He saw his army in danger of defeat and himself in danger of capture, perhaps even of execution for ill-faith. He never had had a cause for fighting the Swedes. The supposed affront to him at Riga three years before was ridiculous. And since then he had confirmed all the old treaties with Sweden. He decided to quit the front for a position of greater safety. His flight that very night when Sheremetief came has been compared with his flight in his shirt to Troitsky Monastery when in danger of murder by the troops of his sister Sophia. It had this in common—that it was an act of self-preservation. Peter intended to go on living for a while.

He took the commander-in-chief with him, and entrusted the direction of the war to the German general von Croy then in his service. Von Croy was not then very eager for the honour and responsibility, but up to that time he had only been " chief military adviser," and he seemed suddenly to have an opportunity of distinguishing himself, having the undivided command.

Peter and Golovin went to the base at Novgorod to organise reserve lines and the expedition of ammunition. Thirty-six hours later, Charles the Twelfth with eight thousand five hundred men appeared in

[1] 17th November.

front of the Russian lines. It was in the morning, and so great a blizzard of snow was raging that at twenty paces distance it was impossible to distinguish friend from foe. The Swedish force was concentrated, but the Russian army was spread over a vast area and was utterly helpless under sudden attack. When the peasants saw the gleam of Swedish steel and the Teutonic faces of the enemy, they thought they were betrayed by their foreign officers. The cry in the *mêlée* was, "The Germans have gone over." The snowstorm and the confusion of battle impeded retreat. The Russians began to kill their own foreign officers. Sheremetief's cavalry plunged into the River Narova to swim their horses to the safer side, and a thousand were drowned. The infantry, swarming over a bridge, broke it down, and many more perished in the waters. The rout was complete when von Croy himself and a number of foreign officers, resenting their treatment by the Russians, surrendered to the enemy.

Two Russian regiments did stand firm and fought till dark, the Preobrazhensky and Semenevsky, Peter's old amusement regiments. Their stubbornness was a remarkable phenomenon. Charles the Twelfth fought in the front of the battle all day and was twice unseated, but went on fighting with zest, pleased at the forlorn resistance of Peter's pet regiments.

At night the Swedish soldiers found the supplies of Russian liquor and got very drunk. Most of their Russian prisoners escaped. At least, that is the Russian version. But Charles did not wish to be incommoded with prisoners, and released personally a considerable number of those who had fought so valiantly at the end of the day, restoring their weapons to them as a mark of appreciation. He was a soldier-sportsman who loved fighting for its own

sake rather than for the conquest of territories or political advantage. Nevertheless he took with him captive into Narva next day ten Russian generals, including the commander-in-chief.

Peter for a brief space became the laughing-stock of Europe. The victory of the Swedes was popular. Poets wrote odes to the boy-hero Charles. Cartoonists depicted Peter on the run with his hat falling off his head. The cowardly behaviour of the apostle Peter at the time of the Crucifixion was used as a figure for the conduct of his namesake fleeing to Novgorod and letting his army be destroyed.

The Tsar was not conscious of disgrace. He set to work at once to re-organise and be able to attack again. As in the Azof campaigns, the first set-back only roused him to greater and more intelligent exertion.

XXII

On the eve of the battle of Narva the Patriarch Adrian died.[1] He had been ailing and spiritless for some time. It was only very weakly that he opposed the shaving of the beards and the change in the calendar. Russia was discontented with him, for he had been allowing power to pass out of his hands, and he was a poor champion of the traditions sacred to him and to so many. On the other hand, he was an obstruction in the way of Peter, who could not tolerate limitations upon his power even when imposed in the name of the Church. He was relieved when the Patriarch died, and resolved that no new Patriarch should be chosen very soon. Perhaps even then he had determined on the abolition of the Patriarchate. Without a Patriarch to thwart him he could do many things that were to his mind. Certainly he could divert some of the revenues of the Church into his war-chest.

Peter therefore appointed a liquidator of the Patriarchate in the person of Stephen, Metropolitan of Riazan and Murom, better known as Stephen Yavorsky.[2] He was called Exarch, and had complete power to deal with heresy, and to carry on the administration of the Church. Stephen Yavorsky was a scholarly Ukrainian who had been sent from Kief in the spring of 1700 to be merely an Abbot. Peter had recognised a useful type, and promoted him rapidly. He was humble, pious, capable, and Western. He

[1] October. [2] 16th December.

could not be chosen as Patriarch, but could occupy the Patriarchal throne.

With him began an epoch of intelligent reform within the Church: a census of monks and nuns was taken, and of all residents and dependents of monasteries. The drones and the parasites were turned out; the monks were made to work more for their support; schools and colleges were founded. No objection was made by Stephen Yavorsky to the raids upon Church revenue for war expenses and upon priests' sons for military service.

Being short of money, Peter began to confiscate some of the property of the monasteries, and being short of metal, he took some of the bells from every belfry in the country. Vinius received the bells and had them melted down and recast as cannon. He was soon proud to report that he had three hundred new guns and a thousand shot ready for each.

The round-up of youth for the army was again made, and many priests' sons were taken, likewise many of the orphans of the executed Strieltsi. More time was given to training. Large orders for small arms were placed in Holland. While Charles the Twelfth hesitated to pursue his advantage, the Tsar superintended the construction of fortifications for all the frontier towns, himself giving a hand to the actual work.

Peter reflected that Patkul might have been right, and that it would have been more prudent to have fought in Ingria than in Livonia. He began secretly to prepare a new base of operations at the little town of Ladoga, south of the lake, a short day's ride from the mouth of the Neva and the area where was to arise St. Petersburg. To this point Vinius was instructed to send artillery and supplies.

Meanwhile there were winter skirmishes. A Russian detachment failed to take Marienburg, and

the Swedish general, Shlippenbach, retaliated with a skirmish near the Petchersky monastery, on the way to Pskof. He was, however, beaten back with some loss.[1] Winter was on the side of the Slavs. The Swedish soldiers had little desire for an adventure in the desolate interior of Russia, where there was no booty and no comfort. The Russian cavalry spent its time raiding Livonian farms and country houses and capturing thousands of civilians. These were sent south, some to prison, some to serfdom.

The Tsar felt the need of stronger support in the field, and did a great deal to persuade the Poles to throw all their resources into the scale. Augustus came to his camp;[2] the two monarchs feasted merrily, and in their sober moments discussed the various aspects of the war. Peter promised to send Augustus a Russian legion, some twenty thousand men armed and equipped. These would ably supplement his Saxons. He signed a new pact of alliance in which overtures for a separate peace with the enemy were precluded. A curious feature of this pact was a secret clause which was to be as valid and binding as if written in the formal document. It obliged Peter to pay Augustus twenty thousand roubles for the purpose of bribing any important Polish gentlemen who by that means might be won to the support of the war.

Seeing that Peter was already in financial straits and that he was by nature very economical, this seems a piece of extravagance. But the Poles were known to be very venal, and could be won in that way. Patkul set an example by corrupting Cardinal Radzievsky, bringing him a sum equivalent to ten thousand roubles from the Livonian nobility.

It is said that Augustus was not single in his aims, and that in fomenting this war against Charles the

[1] January. [2] February.

Twelfth his object was not so much to drive the Swedes north of the sea as to have a pretext for employing in Poland a large number of Saxon troops, his plan being, by a *coup d'état*, to make his title as King hereditary and absolute instead of merely elective. The promised Russian army might also help to that end.

The Poles understood this well enough, and corresponded freely with Charles the Twelfth, who had gone into winter quarters near the Livonian city of Dorpat, sending meanwhile to Sweden for ample reinforcements for his army. It was his intention, freely expressed, to overthrow Augustus and place upon the throne someone who would serve the cause of Sweden.

Peter fulfilled his word. Twenty thousand men were sent under the command of Prince Repnin to join the Saxon forces under Marshal Steinau. They were commendably equipped, and brought with them forty field-guns. Steinau was pleased.

Augustus sent his adjutant-general to Moscow to collect the money promised him.[1] There was difficulty in finding the amount. The city of Moscow gave some; some was taken from Troitsky monastery, some from the tribunals. Rich men subscribed. Menshikof found four hundred roubles. The big sum was raised and sent to Augustus.

Charles the Twelfth has been blamed for allowing Peter so much time to re-organise. It was thought that if he had pressed his advantage after Narva he could have overwhelmed Peter and have easily dethroned him, since he was unpopular with his subjects. But the Swedes despised the Russian power and elected to cope with the man they thought more significant—Augustus. That was unfortunate for the

[1] March.

King of Poland, and possibly very fortunate for the Tsar of Russia.

Charles the Twelfth vented his rage, and spent a good deal of his power in routing Augustus. The Russian auxiliaries promised to Steinau only arrived at the front in June.[1] Sixteen thousand of them were held back to dig defensive positions on the Dwina. They were so obedient and industrious that they made excellent labour battalions. The remaining four thousand did join the Saxons, but only in time to share in a terrible defeat. Charles, with boyish delight in himself, chose to march out from Dorpat on his birthday. He defeated Steinau decisively near Riga and captured the whole of his artillery.

It had been agreed that the army of Augustus should make a bid for Riga and that until Riga was taken Peter should remain on the defensive. Time and Fate were on Russia's side. The Tsar sadly needed encouragement. He had carried his flight from Narva and the rout of his army sheerly on his character and will. No one dare doubt his power. None of his parasites and retainers withdrew to a position of compromise in case the sovereign should be overthrown and dethroned. The Tsar absolutely compelled *esprit de corps* by force of personality. But he had lost a battle; he was an Oriental fighting Europeans. He laboured like Hercules, but he needed some smile from Zeus.

The smile came.[2] Seven Swedish ships of war ventured into Archangel harbour sailing under British and Dutch flags. Peter's boats drove them back. Two went aground and were captured. It could be called a naval victory, and the joy of the shipbuilder can be imagined.

On land Charles still left Peter alone. The new

[1] 29th June. [2] June.

army, all shaved and made to look European, was steadily drilling. Arms and munitions were arriving at Archangel and being carted to the two bases, Ladoga and Pskof. It was not in the temperament of Peter to remain indefinitely on the defensive. He was prudent enough not to go forward himself, but he ordered Sheremetief to advance. Sheremetief had learnt something since he ran from Pyhajoggi. And this time he did not face the King of the Swedes, but merely General Shlippenbach, of whom the Russians had no fear. Sheremetief defeated the enemy decisively at Erestfer,[1] capturing hundreds, and destroying about three thousand. Peter at once made him Field-Marshal and sent him his portrait set in diamonds. He ordered the ringing of the church bells in Moscow—what remained of them after the great fire and the demands of Vinius. The victory was celebrated with salutes of guns, fireworks, the parading of banners—everything to tell Moscow that Narva was avenged and that the star of the redoubtable Tsar was still in the ascendant. Peter himself returned to the capital and gave a great banquet in the Red Square. This, together with the New Year festivities, set a great pace for Moscow merry-makers, and brought back into the national picture the clowns and buffoons somewhat neglected during a year's campaigning.

Peter showed a superior military intelligence after this victory, instructing Sheremetief to lay waste the occupied territory. Charles neglected the defeating of Shlippenbach, believing that he had only to show his face to the Russian army to disperse it. His mind was set upon the invasion of Poland. Peter commenced to destroy the farms and drive out the inhabitants from Livonia. He was now more determined than ever upon the conquest of the Baltic

[1] 29th December.

shores. His friend, William of Orange, had tried in vain to open *pourparlers* between the belligerents. William wished that there should be only one war in Europe, that against France. But France and Spain meant little to the Powers of the north. William died, and Anne succeeded, and there was no further attempt at intervention by the West.

In the following summer Sheremetief annihilated the forces at the disposal of Shlippenbach, took all his artillery, killed five thousand five hundred Swedes, and took possession of the whole northern territory except the fortified towns, Riga, Pernau, Dorpat, Narva, which with their garrisons entered into a state of siege.[1] Shlippenbach, with a few horsemen, escaped to Pernau on the Gulf of Riga. The whole of Livonia was practically delivered into the hands of the Tsar. Patkul had been right in his apprehensions. The terror of Moscow was brought into the land which was systematically devastated from end to end. Captives were herded into Russia and sent, suffering terribly, to the south. There were so many, and they counted humanly for so little, that you could buy a child in the market-place of Pskof for a shilling.

Moscow filled up with Swedish prisoners. Evidently they became a great nuisance to their capturers. Vinius wrote from Moscow that he was eaten up by Swedes, and asked humbly for rest, reminding the Tsar that he was seventy years of age and that his hand shook when he wrote. Peter was not so pleased with his favourite, and sent him to Siberia to inspect his munition factories there. That was all the rest he should get.

The only encumbrance which the army took from the Swedish and Livonian civilians was that of hundreds of girls who slept promiscuously with officers

[1] 18th July.

and N.C.O.'s, Colonels and Generals. Among them was Catherine, evacuated from Marienburg, a servant-girl of seventeen. She became the mistress of a sergeant who flogged her and made love alternately, then of a General for whom she was too vigorous. Menshikof took her to his quarters and she washed shirts for him and was his mistress. Then Peter saw her and slept with her and gave her a ducat. The Tsar and his favourite used her in common. She was destined to become consort and Empress, and ultimately to rule Russia in her own right.

XXIII

Having destroyed provincial Livonia and invested the towns, Peter transferred the seat of action to Ingria [1] and the basin of the Neva, using the base which he had long been preparing at Ladoga. Charles the Twelfth and the main Swedish armies were far away to the south of Lithuania, with wasted lands between them and Peter. Opposing the Russians were only second-class Swedish troops, stolid and unimaginative reserve Generals, "dug-outs," as we should call them in our days. "God has sent us a great opportunity," said Peter, "we must not let it slip from us unused." And he sent for Sheremetief.

Schlusselburg, then called Noteburg, on the widening Neva, just south of Lake Ladoga, was held by only four hundred and fifty Swedes. Sheremetief was set to capture it, and took it by assault.[2] From four in the morning till four in the afternoon the Russians in waves swarmed to the attack, met with a murderous fire from the little fortress. The odds against the Commander were too heavy, and at the end of twelve hours fighting he lowered his flag. Peter was overjoyed, for he believed he held the way to the sea. He renamed the place the Key City—Schlussel Burg, the first of his conquests to be renamed in German.

A flotilla of small boats with sails was soon navigating the Neva River, coming from Ladoga. The winter intervened to freeze them to the banks, but the Russians organised ceaselessly through the winter,

[1] September. [2] 11th October.

and were rewarded in the spring with a marvellous naval victory. The military development had aroused the Swedes. Little by little the poorly defended forests and swamps had been overrun by the Russian army, even to the mouth of the river. The whole terrain of the future capital was captured. On the 30th April Sheremetief began to bombard the little town of Nienshanz, an island fortress in the estuary of the Neva. It capitulated next day.[1] But on the evening following the victory four Swedish gunboats sailed up to the harbour. Here was an opportunity for a great exploit. Peter had hitherto shown himself no soldier, but he believed with some confidence he was a sailor. So once more, as Peter Mikhailof, he set out on the sea. He put the two old regiments, the Preobrazhensky and the Semenevsky, on thirty small boats, and in the dead of night crept up to the Swedes and boarded them. The enemy had cannon, but could not use them to any effect; the Russians had no cannon, but had the advantage of surprise. The two principal vessels of the enemy were captured. The other two got away with heavy loss. There were only thirteen prisoners. Most of the unfortunate sailors "asked pardon too late."

Peter sailed out to the open sea; he had broken a way through for Russia. Now he could think of having "a little window" on the west. The Tsar decorated himself and Lieutenant Menshikof with the Order of St. Andrew. He feasted and danced. His delight was indescribable. This meant more to him personally than any number of victories on land, for it was part realisation of childhood's dream. And it was a remarkable exploit to have defeated the Swedes on the water, worthy of a Hakluyt, had there been one to chronicle it.

[1] 30th April.

Peter was proud of himself. Some thought him a coward when he fled from Narva, but now he had shown to the world and to himself that he had courage, nay, even daring. He was a sea-dog now. If he exaggerated his success and called it unprecedented in history, it was because his mood was one of exaggeration, of personal enlargement. It was in this mood of personal exaltation, and probably over his cups, that he decided to build a great new city and call it after himself.

He chose one of the little islands in the mouth of the Neva. It was called Enisari or Hare Island. The site was a mile nearer the sea than Nienshanz. The foundation-stone was laid on the marsh on the Feast of the Trinity.[1] The Tsar took a bayonet from a soldier, cut out two sods, and placed them crosswise, saying, "Here I will build the town." While he was doing that an eagle was seen brooding in the sky. Two yards of earthwork had been raised when the Tsar placed a stone block upon it. Some thought "Thou art Peter and on this rock I will build" was in his mind. The priests sprinkled holy water on the stone. The Tsar placed upon it a casket containing relics of St. Andrew. Then, with axe in hand, he led the way, hewing down the surrounding woods. A soldier fired and shot the eagle, which had alighted upon two birch trees leaning together like a triumphal arch. Peter took that as good augury, tied the eagle by the legs to his wrist, and sailed down the river with it. That night all ranks were regaled at an open-air feast. Cannon were fired in air. Many barrels of Rhenish were broached, and the festivity lasted till two in the morning. Thus "Piterburkh" was inaugurated, the future capital of the Empire.

First was built a little wooden town, no more than a

[1] 16th May.

collection of army huts. The prime necessity was to build ships of war which could cope with the rest of the Swedish fleet. Under cover of shore batteries the new shipyards and harbour were built. All the summer nine Swedish ships stood outside the estuary and dare not approach near enough to destroy the work that was going on. They were very unenterprising. For Peter, with line and weight, was busy sounding the water under their very noses. On land the enemy was repeatedly driven back, and the Tsar gained a victory, himself leading four cavalry regiments against the forces of General Kronhurt, whom he routed, killing all prisoners, as the Russians did not wish to be incommoded by them.[1]

Charles the Twelfth, who had not the resources of men that Peter had, was constantly drawing reinforcements to his southern standard. He entered Livonia with twelve thousand men in 1702. The numbers of his army doubled during the year 1703, and again greatly increased in 1704. He had not the wide-sweeping, inviolable authority of Peter. His admirals and generals did not fear him. For that reason their resistance in the north was by no means vigorous. The nine ships that had lain idle all the summer drew off at the first sign of bad weather. Suddenly in October their menace was gone, and the sea-horizon was without shadow.[2] They left so early that an enterprising trading vessel from Holland came up with a cargo of salt and wine and entered the new Russian harbour at the mouth of the Neva.[3] Menshikof, very rightly, fêted the captain and his crew, every one of whom received a substantial present. The ship was renamed the *Pitersburg* and was granted substantial privileges for future voyages to the port. The second vessel to enter was English.

[1] July. [2] October. [3] November.

Meanwhile Sheremetief had been working along the southern shore of the Gulf of Finland, making again for Narva and Livonia. Koporie and Yamburg were taken. Yamburg was re-fortified. Menshikof was sent to aid him, and together they crossed the Narova River south of Narva and resumed the process of laying the country waste. Swarms of barbarous Asiatics, specially useful in destruction, were let loose in the little towns—Tartars, Kalmouks, Bashkirs, aided by Cossacks.

General Shlippenbach made but poor resistance. He surrendered Wesenburg, which was reduced to ashes, likewise Weisentein Fellin, Ober-Palen. Ruin. Ruin was ruined. Peter went to Moscow with the plans for his new city and began to dispatch architects and engineers and workmen to Piterburkh. All the winter the work of building, and especially of fortification, went on. The stones and every useful particle of the structure of Nienshanz were carted to the new site. The digging of the foundations of the new city began, and the digging was done with bare hands clawing the earth into sacks. There was a dearth of shovels and spades. Into this hand-digging servitude now entered the Swedish and Livonian prisoners, both civil and military. When the sacks wore out they had to take off their coats and collect the earth in the flaps.

But at this time Peter did not think of making Piterburkh his capital. The victory over the Swedes was not entirely achieved, and the possibility that the Swedes would regain the territory they had lost was not remote. It was not until after the battle of Poltava that the greater notion of Sankt Piterburkh took form from the mind of the Tsar.

XXIV

Meanwhile in the year 1704, famous year of Blenheim in the west, Dorpat and Narva fell into Peter's hands, and he held in his grasp almost the whole of what is now Esthonia and Latvia, territories destined to belong to the Russian throne as long as the throne lasted. Both Dorpat and Narva were anciently Russian, and their conquest enkindled much patriotic ſervour. But Peter at the taking of Narva remembered with resentment the humiliation of his defeat and flight, and revenged his pride dreadfully and cruelly upon the defenders and the civilian population. Women and children were put to the sword. Peter went so far as to strike the Commandant in the face and to have his wife publicly ducked in the Narova River. The massacre was a disgrace, and the Tsar is supposed to have countermanded it when it was too late and to have killed a Russian soldier with his own hands. "The blood on my sword is Russian, not Swedish," he said in defence.

The conquest of the large town of Dorpat was due to the relentless energy of Peter. Sheremetief was tiring of this arduous campaign and, despite the Tsar's urgency, proceeded to the investment of the city in a leisurely way, only hastening his offensive at the news that his sovereign was coming to find out what was being done.

East of Dorpat lies the extensive lake of Chud, out of which the Narova flows north to Narva. On this lake was a small fleet of Swedish vessels. Thirteen

of them were captured in the first week of the campaign.[1] General von Werden, in the Russian service, fell upon them anchored in the little River Embach, and took them without difficulty, an auspicious beginning for the summer warfare. The acquisition of these ships was an immense joy to Peter. The war was not only successful, but profitable.

On the 2nd July the Tsar arrived in front of Dorpat, very eager and impatient. To his eyes Sheremetief had been idling. "There is nothing here to thank God for except the troops, who number about twenty thousand and are in the best of health and spirits," he wrote to Menshikof.

The defenders, who had been confident of their powers of resistance, were soon aware of a change in the spirit of the Russians. Suddenly the giant workman, cudgel in hand, was striding among the earthworks, making every Russian soldier work, re-disposing the batteries and discovering the vulnerable sections of the walls and palisades. A fortnight later the general assault was made and was pushed with a determination which could only mean "We go on till we are dead or the city falls." [2] The battle went on all night, and at dawn the Swedes trumpeted the signal of surrender. Peter had won again.

It was within a month of this that Narva fell, stormed by the Scotsman, Field-Marshal Ogilvy.[3] A week later the fortress of Ivangorod was taken. In the north a new Swedish army attempted to take the infant Petersburg, but was driven back. Some Swedish ships also made an abortive descent upon the harbour. At every point the Russian soldiers and sailors seemed to be now superior to the Swedish, both in initiative, in fighting, and in power of resistance. The Tsar felt that for the time being he had

[1] 5th May. [2] 13th July. [3] 9th August.

achieved his military programme, and returned to Moscow with Catherine and Menshikof. There, with triumphal arches, processions with captives, banners, fireworks, salutes of guns, feasting and drinking, the series of victories was celebrated. Medals were struck, and Zubof and other engravers did popular pictures.

Peter was in a light-hearted mood, having justified himself to his people by his victories, but still he contrived to give a large share of glory to others, and pretended to believe that His Majesty was well pleased with all that had been done, His Majesty being still Romodanovsky, King of Pressburg, from whose hands Peter, in the rank of captain, was decorated for valour.

For the nobles and personalities of Moscow gaiety was compulsory and expensive, and not without danger. The Tsar kept up a game of forfeit all the time, and anyone who infringed what he considered good taste had to pay quaintly devised fines. Peter, in old, stained clothes, would be sitting at a side-table, smoking his long clay pipe and playing chess with a carpenter or a sailor, his flagon beside the taken pieces. The gilded assembly flocked around him. But men and women had to behave. No one must quarrel in public; there must be no spiteful gossip. Spies were everywhere watching conduct. The forfeits were of a burlesque character, it is true; the scandalmonger was forced to drink an eagle of wine right off. But if in conversation *lèse majesté* were committed there were more cruel consequences.

Despite the general parsimony of the Tsar, he spared nothing on drink. His notion of himself as a sailor is said to have been responsible for this. The sea was his element. His friends therefore must be able to take on vast quantities of liquor. The flow underneath must be balanced by the flow up above;

the storms of liquid below will have no terrors for those used to storms of liquid in their own bodies. "A man who cannot get drunk is no good on the sea," was a saying of the time. The consecration of new ships was always followed by great drinking bouts. Peter convinced Neptune in liquor.

The ritual of the Most Holy and Most Drunken, Most Burlesque Synod was greatly developed by the Tsar. There were elaborate baptisings into the Church of Booze. At adult baptism in the Orthodox Church the question was asked "Dost thou believe?" In these other buffooneries the question asked was "Dost thou drink?" There was also a rite of excommunication and anathema when criminals found to have been uprighteously sober were pronounced heretics and cut off from all taverns within the realm.

There was no Patriarch now to make trouble, and Stephen Yavorsky did not protest.

XXV

With the enormous armies which Peter now had in the field, and the new programme of shipbuilding on the Neva, his need of money was very great. This need was increased by the lavish mode of diplomacy which he employed. His envoys in Europe seeking alliance against Sweden were making large financial gifts to any statesmen who might be of service. Patkul, who had now entered Peter's service, young Matveyef, and Dolgoruky were abroad using financial arguments.

First it was desired that Poland should throw in her lot with her King Augustus. Then the co-operation of Holland and England was hoped for and expected.

Cardinal Radzeevsky, although bribed, was playing a double rôle, and was more bound to the cause of Charles the Twelfth than to that of Augustus. Charles had blockaded Dantzig and cut off supplies. He had taken Thorn, Cracow, Poznan, and in a military sense was master of the situation in the south. He was determined to clear off scores with the King of Poland before turning his attention to Peter the Great. The cardinal's position was that of being first after the King. In January 1704, at Warsaw, he called the Polish parliament, the Seim, to discuss a treaty of peace with the Swedes.[1] Charles had said that he would enter into no negotiations with the King, but only with Poland as a Republic. In a

[1] January.

sense, since the King was elective, Poland was a republic and a kingdom at the same time. The Seim was willing to dethrone Augustus, but the presence of a large detachment of Swedish troops outside the Parliament House offended the national pride of the Poles, and the deliberations came to nothing. Augustus meanwhile had captured the Swedish nominee for the throne, John Sobieski. Augustus was in no wise desperate. He called a Seim on his own account, and Radzeevsky was pronounced a traitor.[1] By comparing the votes of these two parliaments it is seen that the majority of the Poles were still loyal to the King. The answer of Charles the Twelfth to this rebuff was to invade and systematically lay waste the estates of those who were not on his side. Then, with the Swedish King and his army standing ominously three miles from the city of Warsaw, Radzeevsky and the Swedish party in the Seim proclaimed a new King of Poland—Leshinsky, substituted by Charles for the imprisoned Sobieski.

Patkul, who was in secret deeply chagrined by Peter's success on the Baltic, wished to embroil him in the southern campaign. Russian interests had no place in his mind. He wrote to Peter that Augustus wished to know what was the ultimate destiny of the Baltic harbours. The Tsar replied that he had merely won back, with the help of God, what had been the property of his ancestors. He did not wish to rule over one Swedish village. But the Baltic shores which he had conquered were Russian, and in the final reckoning must remain with him.

Patkul then said that Frederick the First of Prussia had been willing to send twelve thousand men to the aid of Augustus, but withdrew when he found that the Tsar was not co-operating. He also said, very truly,

[1] February.

that England and Holland viewed with disfavour the Russian invasion of the Baltic.

The Poles as a nation were at last won over to the cause of war. Peter signed a military alliance with them.[1] He was to furnish another twelve thousand men and to give two hundred thousand roubles a year for the upkeep of the Polish army. Certain lost territories were to be restored to Poland. The Poles agreed to keep in the field twenty-six thousand foot and seventy-two thousand cavalry.

Peter, upon his return from the capture of Narva and Dorpat, at once gave orders for the first contingents of the promised twelve thousand to join the standard of Augustus. His whole winter problem consisted in raising levies for the new war and finding the money for the Poles. Augustus, aided by new Russian troops, began to be successful, and drove the Swedes back from Warsaw.[2] Patkul, now with a military command, laid siege to Poznan.

The Tsar employed idea-men whose duty it was to devise new means of taxing the people. Direct taxation did not come near to meet the demands upon the exchequer. The most successful of these pocket spies was Kurbatof, the inventor of Government stamped paper. He unearthed the gold of a number of misers who had been avoiding taxation. His efforts in that direction remind one curiously of the work of the modern income-tax inspectors. Kurbatof became famous. There were a number of others, Baraxin, Ershof, Yakovlief, all ex-serfs, who were ordered to "sit and make income for the sovereign lord."

A number of new taxes were imposed. Thus the clergy were called upon to pay a Dragoon tax which was earmarked for the purchase of cavalry horses.

[1] 19th August. [2] December.

Then a funeral tax was levied, and caused some jesting and some complaint, seeing that the dead must be buried in any case whether the tax were forthcoming or no. There was a tax on marriage, for, as Peter remarked, "Marriage is a bit of a luxury."

There was a new tax on horse-collars and one on the wearing of leather boots. There was a hat tax. The beard tax was systematised. Those who wished to wear beards must also keep to old-fashioned attire, and there was a tax on that too.

Ten per cent. was collected on cab fares. There was a bed tax, a bath tax, a milk tax, an inn tax, a tax on kitchen chimneys, on melons and cucumbers and various provisions. Sectarians had to pay double. Impositions were numerous, often fantastic, difficult alike for tax-collectors and tax-payers. But an increasing stream of revenue did flow into the war-chest. The Tsar was very grateful to his idea-men, and rewarded them even when their proposals were absurd, saying, "After all, they have worked for me."

Another method of raising money was by monopolies. There were so many as almost to constitute a form of State trading. There were monopolies in salt, tobacco, tar, fish-oil, chalk, gum, potash, rhubarb, and even in oak coffins. Of all these the salt monopoly was the most profitable, bringing in something like three million roubles. Salt became very expensive —sometimes as much as a rouble a pound. It is said that in general the monopolies were very badly managed.

Russia was thriving commercially. Trade with Europe was increasing rapidly, but it is doubtful whether with so many men withdrawn from the fields the country as a whole could be getting richer. The war was already a drain upon the vital resources of

the Russian nation. All that could be said in its favour was that a successful conquest of the Baltic must result in greater trade. And whatever were the outcome of the war, Russia was being aroused from mediæval somnolence and her energies were liberated.

XXVI

Discontent outbroke in a far region. No one nearer than the Caspian Sea dare risk the vengeance of the Tsar. But Astrakhan became the centre of a serious rebellion. Merchants from the great cities, Moscow, Yaroslav, Nizhni, and other places, trading in the Caspian port, started the trouble. They vented their ill-feeling concerning the new taxes and the forced change of dress, and found in Astrakhan an inflammable society ready to take light from any firebrand thrust into it. Here were human fragments left over after the execution of the Strieltsi, orphans and mothers nursing hopes of revenge. Astrakhan was a rallying ground for disbanded bandits and Volga pirates and for wild spirits from the Cossacks and from the Asiatic tribes.

Many rumours were in the air. Some said that the dreaded Tsar was dead. But if he were dead, why should there be revolt? It is probable that the legend of the Tsar's death abroad was still current, and that men believed a foreign impostor had taken his place, or even that Antichrist had arrived in the land and taken the shape of the Tsar. The supreme ruler, whoever he was, was presumed to be an unbeliever. The January New Year festival was understood to be entirely pagan. The use by Peter of large figures of two-headed Janus was confused with the unpopular national emblem, the two-headed eagle. New recruits who were branded on one hand to identify them if they deserted were said to have received the

"brand of Antichrist." The new wig-blocks which Peter's officials in Astrakhan were setting up in their houses were said to be idols. The Voivode himself was reputed to have forsworn Christianity. A story was set on foot that Peter had put an interim injunction upon marriage. Some shiploads of foreign bridegrooms were on their way to Astrakhan, and until they arrived in the city no Russian girl might marry.

As a result of the ferment the Voivode was murdered, and an Old Believer set in his place to govern the city. The inhabitants renounced the authority of the Tsar, and sent emissaries to the Cossacks and to the Volga cities inviting all true Christians and Russians to follow their example.

The rebellion depended for its success upon the readiness of Russia to rise against the Tsar. There was great discontent, and Peter at once realised the danger, feeling obliged to detach Sheremetief and an army from his Swedish campaign and send them down the Volga. If the Cossacks deserted their posts the Tartars would rise. If the Volga cities deposed their governors Moscow itself might again become a centre of sedition. His hands were not free to quell the rebellion in characteristic style. So, for the first time in his life, he proceeded with leniency, offering an amnesty to the malcontents if they would surrender their ring-leaders. But, as in the revolt of the Strieltsi, leniency only encouraged the movement. Petty Astrakhan thought it could defy the authority of the sovereign. The Cossacks refused to move. Tsaritsin and other towns scoffed at the idea that Peter was dead, or that alive he was abolishing Christianity. But nevertheless Astrakhan persisted in revolt. The army was obliged to move against the mutineers. Once more a bloody vengeance was

wreaked upon those who dared to lift their hands against Moscow and Preobrazhenskoe, and some hundreds of men were broken on the wheel. Gallows on rafts drifted down the Volga River, like the long, shadowy hand of the dreaded autocrat stretched against the insurgent south.

. . . . . .

Peter had joined his armies in the west and was co-operating with Augustus in the centre. His forces at Petersburg were strong enough to beat back any attack of the Swedish reserves. His main problem was now to defeat and disperse the army of Charles the Twelfth in Poland. The Russians were not so successful here as they had been in the north. The Tsar avoided conflict in the actual territory of his ally, and after a sojourn in Polotsk moved to Vilna and then over to Courland and the borders of East Prussia. The Swedes won the Battle of Gemaurhof.[1] The Tsar did not himself take part in that battle and was in no wise cast down by defeat. He now believed in his military power and in the force of his great personal energy. A fortnight later he marched to the siege of Mitava, capital of Courland. There was no doubt now of his capacity to reduce fortified towns. He had learned to use his childhood's toys. The church bells of Russia were ringing down the cities of the west one by one. Mitava went the way of Dorpat;[2] the ceaseless activities of the besiegers proving too much for the besieged, well equipped as they were. It was an important success. Peter moved his main army to Grodno, called Augustus to him and gave him control for the autumn and winter, warning him, however, not to take the offensive, as Charles was organising from Warsaw and the time was at hand when a great decisive battle might be

[1] 15th July. [2] 2nd September.

attempted by the Swedes. If the Swedes attacked and won, Peter gave orders for his artillery to be destroyed and sunk in the River Nieman.

Charles the Twelfth now sought battle, and appeared in front of Grodno in the beginning of the New Year. Peter, upon hearing the news, returned to the west. It was not his design to meet his enemy in the open, but to wear him down. It is surprising that a Russian soldier and sovereign, flushed with many victories, should have been so cool-headed. The forces at his disposal in the field outnumbered those of Charles the Twelfth by four or five to one. But he did not yet believe in the power of himself or his generals to meet the Swedish hero face to face and win. He was not very well served in the higher command. Sheremetief was old and tired, perpetually homesick for Moscow. The Scotsman Ogilvy was fussy and quarrelsome and despised the personnel of the army under him. One alone was rising to real military ability, and that was his old pie-selling crony—Menshikof. The King Augustus was a pleasant fellow, but lacked power of judgment, or he was dogged by ill-luck. When Charles appeared before Grodno Augustus deserted the scene of danger to go and bring Saxon reinforcements. Instead of returning to Grodno, he gave battle to the Swedes at Franstadt on the Silesian border, and was completely defeated. An army of twenty thousand, including many Russian auxiliaries, was destroyed by a force of half as many Swedes. The Saxon cavalry turned tail, fled at the outset, half the infantry threw away its arms. Peter believed at first that the poor fighting was a betrayal. For that he had given those huge subsidies—to be betrayed by Patkul and his friends! Saxony as a military force had no longer any significance in the war. Peter was almost isolated and Charles seemed to

have now become the arbiter of the destinies of Central Europe.

There was considerable danger that the Russian army at Grodno would be surrounded and obliged to surrender *en masse*. The Tsar advised a retreat from the salient, but Ogilvy dare not risk pursuit by the great forces of cavalry which were at the disposal of Charles. Peter ordered Mazeppa and his Cossacks to come north to the support of Grodno. Now that the Saxon aid was eliminated the danger was greater than ever. Peter overrode the opinion of Ogilvy and ordered him to retire. " Get out by the best road you can and keep near the forests. Take with you the regimental cannon, as many as possible, but if they prove an encumbrance, abandon them. Sink the big guns in the river and do everything to save the men. When you have got about ten miles from Grodno and find some place of strength, where the great forest begins, distribute the whole army in regiments or battalions for guerilla warfare, arranging never to risk the whole force in battle with the enemy. For then, should it be the will of God that one battalion or regiment be destroyed, as the result of an attack, at least all will not be in it. . . . You should contrive this retreat with the utmost secrecy. Strong sentries must watch the inhabitants, that none go out of the city. The mustering of the troops should be swift and secret. . . . Have the cannon in readiness, those you are taking with you and those you will destroy. God preserve you from the enemy gaining information and starting an immediate assault when the big guns have been disposed of. Holes in the ice must be made in advance and the cannon plunged in only at that moment when you have already partly marched out. The withdrawal should begin in the evening but not too late, as you should get to your stronger position

under cover of night. Keep to the woods and to those where the foliage is thickest. Take all the horses and every bit of provender. . . ."

Ogilvy did not answer, and Peter had to order him again to go.[1] Ogilvy was an obstinate Scot, and believed he knew better than the Tsar. There is no suggestion that he was not entirely loyal, but he preferred the more civilised service of Augustus. If left to his own devices he would probably have eventually surrendered to Charles the Twelfth with his whole army. Peter was low-spirited and apprehensive of the power of the enemy, but he resolved in any case to have his orders obeyed. So he took the supreme command away and gave it to Menshikof.[2] Menshikof prepared a bridge, and at the breaking up of the ice on the River Nieman, on Easter Sunday, evacuated the city.[3] The withdrawal was completely successful. It took Charles the Twelfth three days to move his forces across the river, and by that time the whole Russian army had got to safety. The Swedes struggled for some time in the marshes and forests, but soon abandoned the pursuit. Charles the Twelfth probably wavered from his decision to seek an issue with the Russians. His transference of his main army to Saxony made his ultimate disaster almost inevitable. Peter was immensely exhilarated, and took new heart to continue the campaign.

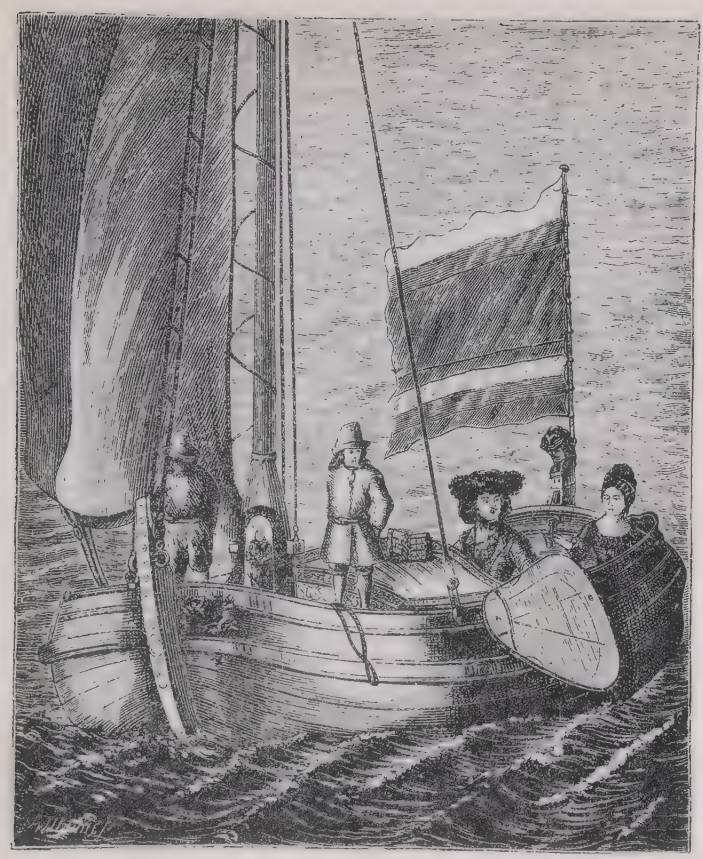
[1] 12th March. [2] 13th March. [3] 24th March.

XXVII

PETER in 1706 was suffering from ill-health, which partly explains his absence from the field. Not that it damped down his activity. He was the same tireless giant in the shipyards of Voronezh and the Neva, the same indefatigable correspondent of his generals and organiser of reserves and supplies, but exposure to the weather did not improve his disease. There were days when it was absolutely impossible for him to leave the warmth and shelter of a house. On these days he was devoid of strength and weak as a child. According to a French chronicler, he had suffered when at Amsterdam "a disgrace in the courts of love," to which were due the increasing troubles in his system. Scurvy, venereal disease, stoppage, and gravel are imputed to him. He certainly suffered a great deal of pain.

The doctors prescribed mercury, and he took his medicine faithfully; and they advised him to be abstemious, but in that matter he was not easily guided. Drink, indeed excessive drinking, was part of that mock religion which in him had superseded Christian piety. Anathema rested upon the sober. The question the Tsar posed to prove manhood was—"Dost thou drink?" But now, and henceforth with increasing gravity, the physicians bade him be temperate.

His letters reflect a morbid state of mind. He was possessed by a melancholy which no one would expect from the man of deeds and action. He repeatedly



Peter with Catherine on the Neva

complained of his health, and was much more low-spirited than any other responsible war-leader. The menace of Charles the Twelfth to his army was not at that time so terrible that a man of Peter's temper should lose heart. But the shadow of coming illnesses was on him, and possibly already some apprehension of death.

It is from this time that the Tsar strove to regulate his life. He actually did begin to drink less, appearing nevertheless to drink as much, and forcing all those about him to drink as much, but often turning the contents of his own glass on the floor. And it was in this year that he took Catherine to wife.

He had discarded Anna Mons. He had had many mistresses—servant girls, laundresses, Swedes, Livonians, Poles, Russians—and had been living very impulsively and promiscuously, but out of the *mêlée* of common women this Catherine stood out as the one whose company he tired of least. She was very attractive, and had also something maternal in her nature: she was endlessly submissive, never lost her patience—but also never lost her spirit. It came to be intolerable that he should share her with Menshikof, that Menshikof should have any pretensions to her whatsoever. Curiously enough, his jealousy of his old comrade did not turn to animosity, hatred, or even coldness. He thought of detaching Menshikof and of marrying Catherine, and in this he was successful. He implored Menshikof to think of his betrothed, Daria Arsenieva, and wrote to him of his duties from a religious standard. Menshikof was no fool, but then also he had no passion for Catherine. It was easy for him to relinquish her. He gave Peter simple obedience, and during the summer which followed the withdrawal of Charles the Twelfth from Grodno he married Daria.

It was a very lively public wedding. Peter and Catherine, like man and spouse, Tsar and Tsaritsa, felicitated and honoured their prime favourites, and there were the usual and more than the usual festivities —fireworks, cannon-firing, banquets, drinking. But Peter drank less than the rest.

His own wedding followed a few months later. The ceremony was quietly performed in St. Petersburg. There was no revelling to be compared with that of the Field-Marshal's wedding. Possibly the rite was illegal. For Peter was not divorced from his first wife, nor was she dead, and he had a living heir. But the authority of the Church had somewhat lapsed. He did not need to take a Patriarch's advice; for Patriarch there was none.

It was a happy union, happy if one considers the obstacles to happiness which lay in the temper of the Tsar. Catherine was a girl with a past; she had no distinguishable breeding or education, but she had much mother-wit and simplicity. She inspired Peter with more lasting passion than did any other woman. Probably also she cared for him, and in her way preserved him. In her Peter found a personality which he had missed since the death of Lefort: one who could soothe and restrain him in moments of unwise, ungovernable rage. In her he found also something he lost when Nathalia passed away—the peace of mother-love. She gave him quiet nights. She exorcised the dreadful dream spirit which tormented him, for he was subject to fearful nightmares. His dreams were so disturbing that he actually began recording them. Holding her he could win back to innocence and sleep quietly as a child.

Peter needed her. She was invaluable. She even went with him to the front and slept in his tent in the midst of war.

It should be said that the secret marriage in Petersburg was followed five years later by an open solemnisation of nuptials. During those five trial years he might easily have abandoned her, had he grown tired of her. But the years added links; they did not break them. Peter needed her more in 1712 than he did even in 1707.

The heir to the throne, the Tsarevitch Alexis, does not seem to have been hostile to this new alliance. His own mother, Eudoxia, was the rightful Tsaritsa and she had been cruelly put away. But Alexis did not champion her. In a sense he was untrue to his mother. But it is possible that Eudoxia had become to him a shadowy unreality. He could see his father. His father was strong-willed, redoubtable, tremendous in peace and war, a hero—all that he, Alexis, could never be. Alexis submissively admired Peter and was loyal to him, even when his birthright was in danger. Catherine was kind to him. He and Catherine were not on bad terms. He even acted as sponsor for her when she was received into the Orthodox Church and baptised again. Peter's animosity against his son had not yet appeared. All that can be said is that he did not seem to set much store upon him as his probable successor.

XXVIII

The Tsar dismissed Ogilvy in September—with politeness and gifts—and he was glad to enter the service of Saxony, which was more refined. The Russians were glad to see him go. He had been a thorn in the side of Menshikof, who was a much more capable soldier. Ogilvy received the rank of Field-Marshal in the Saxon army, but within a month of his joining it peace was signed between Saxony and Sweden.

Charles the Twelfth, having dispersed all opposition, enforced peace on pain of laying Saxony waste.[1] At the castle of Altranstadt near Leipzig the plenipotentiaries of Augustus agreed to these terms: Augustus should resign the Polish throne and recognise Stanislas Leshinsky as King; he should dissolve the alliance with the Tsar; he should surrender Patkul and the Russian auxiliary troops; and free Sobieski. He agreed to the upkeep at his own expense of a Swedish army of occupation to remain in Saxony all the winter.

The Swedish hero preferred to make peace with a simulacrum rather than deal with his real enemy. Five days after the signing of the treaty Menshikof fell upon the army of General Mardeveld near Kalish, and utterly routed it.[2] Thousands were killed, and a great number surrendered. The worst of it was that Augustus himself was with Menshikof in this battle. He knew he had signed peace, but the Russians

[1] 13th October. [2] 18th October.

did not know of his treachery. Augustus sent secret messages to the Swedish general to try to avoid battle, but all to no avail. Augustus was in the unenviable position of being a traitor to both sides. Add to that, he had been cringing for weeks for more money. "The King never does anything but cry, 'Give, give, money, money,'" said Peter.

Augustus was at Warsaw feasting with the victorious Russians, drinking to ultimate victory and enduring comradeship in arms, when the rumour that he had signed peace became current. Such rumours must naturally have been scorned. It was weeks before definite confirmation was received. Prince Dolgoruky had the first reliable information on 17th November. He sought explanation from the Polish King, and the latter said, "I only did it to save Saxony from ruin and stave off utter disaster. Secretly my pact with the Tsar remains as firm as ever." But two days later before dawn he left Warsaw for a rendezvous with Charles the Twelfth.[1]

Peter, who had been unsuccessfully besieging Viborg in Finland, left his winter camp on the Neva and arrived in December in Poland, where at Zolkief in Volhynia he met Sheremetief, Menshikof, and Dolgoruky, and discussed the new position. The Treaty of Altranstadt was being observed by the Saxons. Patkul had been delivered up and executed. The fate of the Russian troops in the Saxon service was unknown, but the worst was feared. The Tsar now felt it wiser to try to obtain peace for himself on terms. Charles the Twelfth must be weary of war and anxious to return to his country to celebrate his victories. He had little to gain by throwing himself against the vast forces of Russia.

At the peace conference of Zolkief there were many

[1] 19th November.

advisers. Golovin had died on duty, running from city to city on his master's business. Golovkin, one of Peter's childhood friends, took his place as chief diplomatic adviser, afterwards being named Chancellor. Golovkin therefore had his place in the deliberations of Zolkief. Mazeppa was also there, and the young Tsarevitch Alexis, aged eighteen, took a part.

Peter was more concerned at the gravity of the burden upon his shoulders than at the defection of Augustus. He did not vent his spleen on his old drinking companion and ally. Possibly he made due allowance for his unfortunate situation. He bore him no ill-will, and was even ready to see him re-established as King of Poland should opportunity arise. At this moment, however, a compromise must be sought with the Swedes and the Poles. Stanislas Leshinsky was unpopular in the country. The Russian plan was for the deposition of this monarch by the Poles, and the substitution of the previous choice of the Swedes, namely, John Sobieski, whom Augustus had imprisoned, but now liberated. Peter attempted to come to terms with the Polish Diet. Its requirements were various and venal—a subsidy of fifty thousand roubles and reparations in cash for damage done in the south-east and north-east by the Cossacks and Kalmouks, and the delivery of certain Ukrainian bandits. Peter could not find the money. Twenty thousand roubles was all that he could lay his hands on at the moment. The Poles insisted on at least twenty-five thousand roubles down.

A whole year elapsed, during which time behind the general intrigue Peter prepared his defences in case of a resumption of war. Charles the Twelfth and his staff enjoyed themselves and their triumph in Saxony,

living on the fat of the land. Russian *pourparlers* were repulsed. Charles thought not of peace but of repeating in Moscow what he had done in Warsaw, deposing Peter and putting his own nominee on the throne of Russia. He saw both himself and the East out of perspective. Megalomania was ill-combined with some ignorance of geography. He had already lost several battles to the Russians; how would he fare with his war-weary Swedes in the depths of this barbarous country, harassed by guerilla bands and countered by the inventive, watchful, tireless organiser, Peter? The European envoys in Saxony raised their brows in doubt. They were by no means assured that fresh laurels awaited him in Russia.

The Poles, after much protest, took the twenty thousand roubles, five thousand roubles extra being given quietly to the two most influential in their councils. They argued that they might as well take the money; they did not intend to give any military aid, and pretended to understand their position as that of benevolent neutrality. When Charles the Twelfth at length moved against the Russians they celebrated the event with much feasting.

To Peter it seemed that what the Polish Republic needed was a man at the head of it, someone of authority who could be made to keep promises, and it was for that reason he pressed the new candidature of Sobieski for the throne. Meanwhile, unknown to the Tsar, Stanislas was tapping Mazeppa to discover whether the Cossack leader could be won over to his side. Mazeppa, fearless but stupid, was jealous of Menshikof. But for the time being he denounced those who tried to make him disloyal. There was great discontent among his followers. Peter was too hard and overbearing a master. The wild horsemen were set too many tasks. They wished to get back to

their fields and their homes. They resented the encroachments of Peter's officials, resented the new taxes, the forced recruiting, the territorial menace. Many grievances urged Mazeppa to forsake the standard of the Tsar. He promised to go over to Charles the Twelfth, and did not intend to keep his promise. He did not intend to go over, and yet eventually did go—to Charles, to ruin.

Peter trusted the Cossack leader and disregarded the information against him which his spies brought to him. A judge of Kief, Kotchebui, denounced Mazeppa to the Tsar. He had evidently obtained the true facts, but was inspired not by loyalty to the Tsar, but by a personal grudge against the Cossack. Mazeppa, against Kotchebui's wish, had been passionately courting his daughter. The judge for his pains was put to the torture and obliged to confess that his charge against Mazeppa was fabricated by him in desire for vengeance. He and his instrument, the monk Isidor, were delivered to Mazeppa, who had them executed in front of his whole army of Cossacks and Ukrainians.

About this time, at Vilna, Peter received from his ambassador at Constantinople a present of two Arab boys, or were they Negroes to be added to his motley collection of dwarfs and freaks? The Tsar had them baptised into the Orthodox faith and attached them to his person. They were great favourites. One of them, called Ibraham, was re-named Peter Hannibal. He became the grandfather of the mother of Russia's great poet, Pushkin. The boys diverted the Tsar greatly. Even in times of greatest stress he never omitted his diversions.

The long period of waiting for a definite issue with Charles the Twelfth put a strain on the patience of Russia. It was a time of great privation and labour.

Enormous gangs were at work on the fortifications of Kief and Smolensk and many strongholds of the south-east. They toiled winter and summer, ill-paid, ill-housed. Theirs was a worse condition than that of ordinary agricultural serfdom. It was like penal servitude in Siberia. Similar gangs were at work at Petersburg, at Kronstadt, at Voronezh, toiling incredibly, dying from malnutrition, fear, ague, but ever replenished from the nation's vast reserves of men.

Moscow was controlled by Romodanovsky and others, absolutely submissive to the Tsar's demands. The Council of Nobles, nominally able to advise, was dumb. A new Ministry of Accounts had been established. For Peter wished to know at any time just what money was available. His expenses were unparalleled in the past of Russia. Never had there been such numbers of tax-collectors. Money was taken from every imaginable source. In those days such a device as war-loan was unknown. The churches, the monasteries, the landed gentry, the traders, all were shorn of their incomes. It was impossible to get rich. The petty traders, the shopkeepers, the clergy, the small farmers, the officials, the artisans, all felt the constant strain of war. It is true that Peter encouraged trade in every possible way, considering it, in his own phrase, " the artery of war," but the material advantage of increasing trade was not sufficient to raise the spirits of the people as a whole.

Old Russia had retreated, but was not dead. It was completely intimidated. It hid its head. But it preserved in the national consciousness the sense of a great shadow of evil over the land.

XXIX

Charles the Twelfth had no intention of compromising the war with Russia. Peter, on the other hand, was willing to make peace. He sought the intervention of England, the greatest Power in Europe, and of Holland. He went so far as to promise to surrender the Baltic sea-board which he had conquered. But he would not give up Petersburg. Charles the Twelfth would only make peace on the evacuation of all conquered territory and the indemnification by Peter of all whose property had been destroyed. Queen Anne did not wish to quarrel with either Russia or Sweden. The Dutch were jealous of Russia's new maritime position. No one in the West was greatly concerned over Peter's difficulties. His only support in quest of peace he obtained from Louis the Fourteenth, and from that point Peter began to transfer his European sympathies from England and Holland to France. Not that he gained anything from his embassy to Paris. The quarrel had to be decided in the field. The military spirit of Charles the Twelfth was the indissoluble factor.

In August the King of Sweden departed from Saxony at the head of a magnificently equipped army, a fighting force of forty-four thousand five hundred men of whom twenty-four thousand five hundred were mounted.[1] Levenhaupt had an army of sixteen thousand in Livonia; Lebeker with fourteen thousand men was in readiness in Finland. Peter and his generals at once

[1] August.

decided upon the characteristic Russian device in strategy, to retreat before the enemy, avoiding general engagements, but fighting delaying actions at the junctions of rivers. Polish territory was peacefully evacuated; the population was not alienated by marauding. And the Swedes, when they arrived, found the Poles much more hostile than a year before. The civil population met them with passive resistance.

Charles the Twelfth has often been likened to Napoleon, and yet how unlike the great Corsican he was! Instead of hurling his compact and extremely effective army at once on Peter, he delayed four months on the Vistula, waiting for the ice to bear, letting winter come to the support of his enemy. There was no autumn campaign. During the whole of the four months the Swedish soldiers molested and robbed the Poles, and when at last they crossed the river they were attacked by snipers and bandits.[1] There was severe frost and heavy snow; the Swedes camped under the open sky, great numbers of their horses perished from cold. In fact, the Russian winter won the first battle of the campaign. The Swedes were put out of humour with the war. They wreaked their ill-feeling on the prisoners they took; it is recorded that they rounded up the Polish peasant population and killed numbers of women and children. But Charles was not in the least affected by hardships or by petty conflicts with civilians. He moved his army in a north-westerly direction toward Grodno, which, having taken a year before, he doubted not that he could take again. Word came that Peter was in Grodno; he pressed forward with eight hundred cavalry, with mediæval rage seeking to meet his enemy face to face. But Peter had outlived the

[1] December.

Middle Ages. Two hours before the Swedish hero entered the city Peter had gone.[1]

It was a victory for Charles. The German general in the Russian service had two thousand Russians at his disposal for the defence of the crossing of the Nieman. He failed to counter the onset of the cavalry, and after the battle went over to the enemy. Peter, arriving the same night at Meretch, half-way to Vilna, gave orders for general destruction of cattle and fodder in all the region about Grodno, "and as for ourselves, what we find our way we destroy." The capture of Grodno lit up the flames of devastation.

Giving instructions to Menshikof, he warned him to place his reliance upon tried Russian officers rather than upon "those clowns who are ruining us." It is interesting that by clowns he referred to foreign officers like the German general at Grodno. He began, at least in military matters, to believe more in Russians than in his foreign mercenaries. Next day the Tsar had gone further back, and was at Vilna. Charles possibly had some idea of pursuit, but upon reaching Smorgon changed his mind. The winter campaign presented too many difficulties. He came once more to a halt in a vast snowy laager at Radoshkovichi. Peter, who was suffering from his chronic illness, went to his little house in Petersburg, to Catherine and a certain respite from active campaigning. "I have never felt ill in this heavenly place before," he wrote. At times he thought he would die. On 8th January he made provision for Catherine. "If God's will should happen to me, give three thousand roubles in the keeping of Prince Menshikof to Ekaterina Vasilievka and her little girl." It is curious to speculate what would have happened to Russia if at this critical time he had perished. The

[1] 26th January.

condition of his blood was such that he was in a constant state of fever. Fever wasted him. He was a victim of rheumatic aches and pains. He weakened. His chest became affected, and he coughed day and night. For weeks he was confined to the house and dare not go out of doors. On the 1st of May he began a mercury treatment. His hut on the Neva became a nursing home.

Charles undertook no enterprise of great moment. Even his general in Finland marked time and made no descent upon Petersburg. Peter was aware of the menace from the Finnish border, and even in the worst days of his mercury treatment, when all his strength seemed to have departed, gave sick-bed orders for the fortification of his new city. The Troubetskoy bastion began to arise, the foundation stone laid by Stephen Yavorsky. Peter also gave orders for new fortifications for Moscow, and took extraordinary precautions in case Charles should by forced marches make a sudden descent upon the capital. Bread and treasure were concentrated within the Kremlin; all the Swedish prisoners were evacuated. Preparations were made to destroy all cattle and supplies from the territory, beginning sixty miles from Moscow to the Polish frontier. The peasants were to be in readiness to abandon the land. And, sick or well, Peter was obeyed.

No one except Charles the Twelfth, not even his own generals, knew what he would do next. For that reason spies were of little service, and prisoners could tell little. He wintered east of Minsk at Radoshkovichi, but did not move at once, even when the snows melted. It was among wildernesses of forest and marsh unsuitable for spring transit. It was not till June that he continued, and then it seemed that Moscow was his object. The Swedish army advanced

due east to the Berezina River. Menshikof and Sheremetief were there to defend the approaches of Berezof. Charles, however, evaded them by leading his army through what was considered an impassable country, largely morass, and he crossed the river without fighting.

The Russian armies wheeled to catch the Swedes on the marshy banks of the little tributary Bibitch. Near Golovchin they were defeated, but retired in good order some twenty miles east to the Dnieper and the town of Mogilef.[1] Peter had recovered, and received the news of this battle while on his way to the front. He viewed the action of his generals with approbation. To harass the enemy and waste his forces was effective strategy, and reverses were victories of a kind. However, when he learned that cannon had been abandoned and that some of his regiments had not fought very well, he insisted upon courts-martial for all concerned and exemplary punishment.

Charles laid siege to Mogilef, but his whole army was now suffering from the artificial famine which the Russians had created. There was little food for man or horse to be found anywhere, and the misfortune of dearth was increased by the incessant rain. The Swedes said they had only three doctors: vodka, garlic, and death. All August they scoured the country for stray ears of corn. Charles began to feel that his force was not proportionate to his task, and sent urgent messages to Levenhaupt to come with his army to his support. Levenhaupt did not arrive.

On the 29th August the Russians fell upon the ill-disposed right wing of the Swedish army, inflicting great loss before Charles moved to its succour, and thereupon retired to the forests according to plan. Peter said there were three thousand Swedes killed,

[1] 3rd July.

and was well pleased with the shooting. Charles decided to raise the siege, and set off southward for the Ukraine and better pasture.

This change in direction made the task of Levenhaupt much more difficult. Tardily, but with goodly supplies, the Swedish general was approaching the main army. In less than a week he could have made it. But in turning away from Mogilef Charles left the Tsar between himself and Levenhaupt. Peter seized his great opportunity. The Swedes, having crossed the Dnieper,[1] sought to creep round to the south secretly, and actually had made some progress in outflanking the Russians. But Peter overtook them and routed them at Lesnoi,[2] near the town of Propoisk. The Swedes gave battle at one in the afternoon, and an extraordinary contest took place, largely in the woods. The Russians were immensely superior in forest fighting, and the Swedish cavalry were placed at great disadvantage. The destructive sniping continued all the afternoon and evening, and it was difficult to tell who was winning. At times the Swedes thought that the victory was theirs and their bugles sounded an advance, but over thirteen thousand Russians were in front of them, mostly in cover. Peter reported eight thousand Swedish dead. At nightfall the standards fell. The Kalmouks murdered all the wounded. The artillery was abandoned. All the transport, including three thousand wagons mostly laden with supplies, fell into Peter's hands. The Russians captured forty-two flags. The wretched Levenhaupt, with his demoralised fugitives still harassed by pursuing bands, then went on to join Charles, but without the supplies which were so necessary to the Swedes in the wasted lands.

It is curious that Peter, who was indifferent to the

[1] 21st September. [2] 27th September.

comparative merits of Protestantism and Orthodoxy, believed that God was on his side. After his successful affray he wrote : " Such accuracy of fire and action on the part of our soldiers I have not seen before; God grant it again in the future. And the Swedish King has not met with such before in this war. Oh, God, do not withhold thy mercy from us in the future."

And after this battle of Lesnoi he ascribed his success to the mercy of the conquering God. He undoubtedly prayed God for victory, believing in the efficacy of prayer. He had no evil conscience. No notion ever arose that God would punish him for his mockery of religion, for his cruelty and vice. He had a profound belief that what he was doing for his country was inestimable service to the Deity. He also preserved a childish traditional belief that God guarded His anointed.

XXX

Mazeppa chose this unpropitious moment to go over to the enemy. That meant that with good fortune Charles the Twelfth would have the Ukrainian Cossacks and the rich supplies of Little Russia at his disposal. "A new Judas has arisen," said Peter, and he was greatly astonished. He had had a settled belief in the loyal and steadfast character of the Hetman of the Cossacks and had for some years refused to give credence to any denunciations.

Charles the Twelfth had reached Starodub and was now in the interior of Russia. Mazeppa, with a small band of followers, joined him there and by manifesto tried to raise the whole south against Peter. The Tsar sent Menshikof to Little Russia, where he reduced and burned the fortress of Baturin, which Mazeppa's Cossacks held. The war moved from the River Dnieper to the River Desna. Peter proclaimed Skoropadsky Hetman of the Cossacks in Mazeppa's place.[1] The Church was advised, and gladly agreed to anathematise and excommunicate Mazeppa, for he was reputed to wish to bring Little Russia to the Pope of Rome by way of the Uniat sect. The soldiers and partisans of the heretic captured at Baturin were all put to death. The inhabitants of Little Russia prudently avoided the cause of Charles, and the anathema was pronounced in most of their churches. The wild spirits who thought of following Mazeppa were deterred by Peter's resounding victories. It was

[1] 12th November.

in vain that the excommunicated Hetman tried to persuade the religious that it was Peter who was the arch-heretic, introducing all manner of changes in ritual and depriving Russia of a Patriarch. His alliance with a Swede and a Protestant was not inspiring. Charles therefore gained little from the support of Mazeppa.

He now abandoned the idea of striking direct at Moscow. He did not believe that he could be conquered by Russians; he still despised them. But together with his generals and his brave army he was cast away in the depths of a country whose geography, climate, or people he little understood. There commenced the terrible winter of 1708–1709. He had accomplished nothing; he had no food, his communications were cut, and the lands were bare. He reached the region of Romni, a hundred miles east of Kief and about the same distance north of Poltava, in the month of November, and halted, the Tsar's armies following him at a distance, like innumerable wolves. The birds were frozen to the trees, even the Russians died of cold; the sufferings of the Swedes were beyond words. They found they could not safely stay at Romni, and went on again in a blighting north-easter to Gadiatch, thirty miles nearer Poltava. "I doubt if we shall get through this winter without a general engagement, but the game is in God's hands," Peter wrote. Weakened as the forces of Charles were, he had still no desire to force them in the mass or to risk anything in a great stand-up fight.

There was little accommodation for the Swedes in Gadiatch, which was already partly destroyed by Russian fire. They must camp in the open and endure the utmost rigours of the winter. With their cannon overwhelmed by snowdrifts, their horses perishing, their ammunition spoiling, Peter was

content to leave his enemy in the hand of God, and light-heartedly went away to Voronezh for a winter holiday of shipbuilding. The Turks were stirring again. His Black Sea fleet needed supplement and supervision.

All the advisers of Charles now favoured a retreat to Poland. Somehow he must extricate himself from his hopeless position. But the Swede was as obstinate as he was bold. All the weaker men in his army had perished; the remainder were iron, or, shall we say, Swedish steel. Stolidity, desperation, and enormous experience made them very redoubtable even in such distress as had now overtaken them. They inflicted heavy losses on the Russians at each encounter. Their leader overlooked the fact that the Slavs could afford to lose, while he could not. At Rashevko, on February 18th, the Russians took two thousand emaciated horses which at least represented several tons of horse-flesh. It did not matter that Russian casualties were great and that a very capable Russian officer in the person of Bartenief was killed.

Even Mazeppa now saw that the game was up and proposed to betray Charles to the Russians if they would reinstate him as Hetman of the Cossacks.[1] At the same time, however, he wrote to Stanislas offering the Ukraine to Poland if only he would march to the relief of the army of Charles the Twelfth. Stanislas was proving a very tepid and passive ally of the Swedes. For all he did to help them it was the same as if Poland were independent and neutral. Neither of these efforts bore fruit, but Mazeppa proved able to attract the Zaporozhian Cossacks, who were fiery local patriots in the lower Dnieper region. These untameable horsemen became at once a menace to the Russians, and their power to raid and harass the

[1] March.

great army alarmed Peter, perhaps unduly. Menshikof destroyed their stronghold, Sietch, in the spring.

In April Peter felt his illness returning upon him. He was in no fit state for camp-life, and it was partly for his health's sake that he went to Azof. There he began another mercury treatment which was at once effective but reduced his strength to that of a child. His recovery was not so rapid as he expected. Charles was laying siege to Poltava.[1] There were diversions, night attacks, sallies of the defenders, prolonged cannonades. Menshikof never gave his enemy rest. He knew now that he could defeat the Swedes and that their destruction or mass surrender was at hand. He urged Peter to hasten to the front to be in at the death. But it was not till the end of May that the Tsar had strength to move. Then suddenly his strength came back. He left Azof on the 27th May, arrived at Kharkof on the 31st, reaching Poltava on the 4th June.

Charles, in a frenzy, was now to be seen in the thick of every fight. He was the greatest fighting soldier in history. Since he entered Russia he had never undressed to sleep or wash. He had not changed his coat or his boots. Neither had he shed any of his military ideas. The young man who at his coronation snatched the diadem from the Archbishop and crowned himself, was as self-reliant as of yore. But he was hard pressed. The great stag was at bay. His antagonist, tumbling, clawing, crafty, oblique-eyed, might well be thought to be a poor match for such a handsome animal. But the bear is never more dangerous than when defending its lair.

It seems certain that at any time during the spring of 1709 Menshikof could have made an end of Charles

[1] May.

and his army. But Peter, when he arrived on the scene of action, was still in favour of caution. He endeavoured to relieve the city without giving battle on a large scale. He delayed till the Russian defenders had shot their last cartridge and signalled their great distress across the Swedish lines. There was then only one course, and that was a trial of strength. The large Russian reserves were moved forward to join the active fighting units. Covered by their artillery fire, with drums beating and colours flying, all the choice regiments of the Tsar crossed the River Vorskla, two miles from the city.[1] The Swedes did nothing to prevent them. Five days later, in perfect order, the whole Russian army advanced to within a quarter of a mile of the Swedes, and in one night of unexampled labour dug themselves a complete system of trenches, the cavalry, mounted and in readiness, remaining on guard to ward off any enemy attack.

The Swedes allowed this without molestation. But Charles himself, somewhat curious as to what was going on, rode out at midnight to reconnoitre the Russian camp.[2] In the woods he stumbled upon a Cossack post. The Swedish King lifted his musket and fired, killing one of the men. Then he leapt from his horse to make an end of the others. They replied, and the King was severely wounded in one foot. A bullet went all the way from toe to heel. How he got away under the circumstances is difficult to explain, unless he had sufficient nervous energy in the moment of excitement to get back on his horse and ride away. When next he appeared on the field he was carried in a litter. He was obliged to give the chief command to Field-Marshal Rensheld.

Peter, in consultation with Sheremetief and Men-

[1] 20th June. [2] 25th June.

shikof, decided to give battle on the 27th. The omens for success were very favourable. The Swedish artillery, owing to lack of ammunition, was now almost silent. The Russian position was excellent. The army outnumbered that of Charles in the proportion of four to one. The only hope of the Swedes was that through sudden attack they might be able to stampede Peter's great force. This must have been the counsel of the wounded Charles, for while it was yet dark in the short summer night, six battalions of Swedish infantry, supported by some squadrons of horse, began the battle, attacking the Russian cavalry with unheard-of fury, driving it back and capturing two fortified positions and seriously wounding General Renne, who had command of a third of the Russian army. General Bour, who took his place, was ordered to retire to the woods beyond the general entrenchment. The Swedes followed, and were caught in a deadly cross-fire from the trenches. They became somewhat confused, took cover in the forest. Thus a considerable portion of the Swedish army became cut off very early in the fight. Menshikof led five cavalry regiments and five battalions of foot against the army in the forest, and captured Generals Schlippenbach and Rosen and a great number of the rank and file.

Then to a steady drum-call which lasted two hours the Russian infantry defiled from the trenches and formed up in battle array. A forest of bayonets grew and glittered in the morning light. Smoke of burning forest and cannon fire curled in the sky. The great Peter, emaciated through illness, but tireless, was everywhere to the fore, watching, encouraging, scolding. Charles, incredibly enraged, was in a litter in the midst of his army. It was suddenly shot to pieces. The King fell in the dust. He was raised and put upon crossed lances, and despite the confusion

of the onset was carried thus into the thick of the fight. He believed, like Edward the First, that even his bones could win victories. He called his soldiers by their pet names, called them Swedes. But it was in vain. The Russians were too many. The Swedes were too far spent. After two hours of unequal strife, in which the followers of Charles fought with extraordinary valour, the whole front gave way. The cry was: "All is lost; save the King." By noon the battle was over. Charles and Mazeppa with bodyguards had fled, and the rest of the army was destroyed or made prisoner. Peter, who had taken a vigorous part in the final *mêlée*, had had his hat shot through, a bullet had gone through his saddle and another had been stopped by the cross on his breast. He ordered the Swedish dead to be counted, and found them to number over nine thousand. He ordered at once a religious thanksgiving on the field of battle. He and all his officers and the whole army knelt on the ground before the emblems of their religion and thanked the all-merciful God for final victory.

"Now indeed," wrote Peter, on the evening of the fight, "we can lay the foundation of Sankt Petersburg."

"Now your Majesty will be able to have a residence in Peterburkh," he wrote a few days later to Romodanovsky.

XXXI

On the field of battle there was feasting.[1] Peter gave Marshal Rensheld back his sword. The Swedish officers sat at dinner with the Tsar. While they were eating and drinking Count Piper with two of Charles' secretaries came into camp and surrendered, as they could see no safe refuge. Peter sat them at table with the rest and, raising his glass, proclaimed a toast: "Our teachers!"

"Who are they?" asked Rensheld in some perplexity.

"Gentlemen, yourselves, the Swedes," answered the Tsar.

Meanwhile Charles himself escaped. The stragglers all surrendered. Mazeppa got away with two barrels of gold. Charles might have proved to be an embarrassing prisoner, but it was a mistake to allow such a spirited leader to take refuge with the Turks. The banquet after the battle of Poltava was the most expensive one Peter ever gave, for part of its ultimate cost was a new war with Turkey and the loss of Azof and Taganrog. It is true, however, that the King of Sweden was ruined and never recovered his military position. From the day of the battle of Poltava Sweden ceased to be a great power in Europe; it may be said also that from that day dates the recognised power of Russia in Western civilisation.

The official rejoicings in Moscow were sustained and elaborate. The Tsarevitch entertained all the

[1] 27th, 28th June.

representatives of the European Powers at a great banquet at Preobrazhenskoe. Perhaps for the first time the foreign envoys at the capital saw justification for the fireworks, the salutes, the libations of wine, and the native exaggeration in Russian speeches. The Tsarevitch, though unlike his father in disposition and ability, was likewise a great drinker and plied his guests handsomely.

There were free tables in the streets of Moscow with barrels of beer and wine, vodka and mead. All might help themselves and make merry, even the Swedish prisoners if in the circumstances they felt like rejoicing. The church bells of the city rang incessantly for eight days, and women and girls were allowed to pull the ropes. Russia was sincerely joyful. The great victory must result in a remission of taxation and in a return home of long-absent husbands, sons, and brothers. Kurbatof, the fiscal inventor, urged upon the Tsar the immediate conclusion of peace.

Peter stayed to take the first-fruits of victory. He met and embraced Augustus, and forgot all he had against him, and made him King of Poland again;[1] for Stanislas Leshinsky fled, not abiding question. The Polish nobility laconically thanked their liberator. The country of Livonia was made over to Augustus and his heirs for ever. Not that he ever received it! The Livonian ports proved too valuable to part with. A simple formula for peace with Sweden was discovered. The Swedes must return to Sweden and stay there. There remained one great city in Swedish hands and unsubdued—" accursed Riga "—and the Tsar took pleasure in hurling into it with his own hands the first bombs,[2] thus childishly avenging himself for the affront he had received so many years before.

[1] 9th August. [2] 14th November.

And Sheremetief with a large army attacked Riga, but as it could not be reduced by a general onset he withdrew to winter quarters in Courland. Prince Repnin and seven thousand men were left beleaguering the city. Dolgoruky concluded a defensive alliance against the Swedes with Denmark.[1] Peter, who was ill again, went to what he now called "the holy land," his precious Petersburg, and Catherine nursed him till he was fit to return to Moscow and the festivities which awaited him there.

Orders were now given for the quarrying and transport of stone for the new and real city. All the nobles and generals were ordered to have stone houses in Petersburg. As the battle of Poltava was fought on St. Samson's day, a church in the name of the saint was ordered to be built. The Tsar's plans for his new city now rushed to action and realisation. Despite his fever and pains he was profoundly happy. The happy mood lasted through convalescence and bore him to Moscow for the festivities of victory. On the 12th December he reached Kolomenskoe, and bade the Guards regiments march out to meet him. The Swedish prisoners, numbering twenty-two thousand, were mustered. The captured flags of the enemy were given to brave Russians to carry.

Triumphal arches meanwhile were being constructed in Moscow. Emblematic pictures, effigies, and banners were got ready. These were mostly classical in their allusions. There was nothing Russian or Byzantine in the show. But, for the benefit of the masses, interpretations of the signs were distributed.

It was a Roman triumph. Still, Peter did not enter as Tsar and conqueror, but as an officer in his own army. He contrived to give the glory to Shere-

[1] 15th November.

metief, Menshikof, and to his Majesty the King of Pressburg. The Swedish generals in captivity were greatly perplexed when they were brought before the throne and saw sitting there one who was not Peter. The mystification increased as, with all solemnity, the Tsar's whim was carried out, and Sheremetief and Menshikof and Peter in turn ascended humbly the dais to recount to the mock King their victories, Peter making himself responsible for but one success, that of the battle of Lesnoi.

Romodanovsky, attentive, indulgent, benevolent, unsmiling, heard each in turn and gravely commended him for the part he had taken and thanked him. Medals were bestowed. Occasionally the King turned solemnly to the Chancellor Golovkin to discuss some point. But it is not recorded that even the Muscovite soldiers guffawed at this elaborate make-believe.

They were waiting for the fireworks and the beer, and of both there were plenty. Even the Swedish prisoners enjoyed themselves.

The festivities were not complete without an immense buffonade, the marriage of a dwarf man and a dwarf woman. The fools and dwarfs of the Court had increased greatly in numbers, for Peter on his various campaigns had been on the alert for freaks. Officers who failed in their duty through sheer stupidity were numbered among the Court fools instead of being more brutally punished. They had to play their part with the rest, and mew and quack and bark and flap imaginary wings, and wear feathers and tails. And they drowned the memory of Charles the Twelfth and their shame in mead.

XXXII

Romodanovsky now received the title of Kaiser. His power did not increase. He was the Tsar's viceroy, but the administration of Russia was largely in the hands of the "ministers," Finance, Kurbatof; State Chancellor and Foreign Secretary, Golovkin; Admiralty, Fedor Apraxin. The Tsar's secretary, Makarof, who read every report, complaint, petition, before handing it to the Tsar, had also a very large share of power in Russia. He was helped by the Archpriest of Mirth, Nikita Zotof, who also accompanied the Tsar and was perhaps partly responsible for some of those obscenities in Peter's letters which in the printed archives are now indicated by dots. But Zotof had little power. Makarof, on the other hand, had such control of the Tsar's mind that his influence was sought on all hands.

The new Governors of provinces had power in their domains second only to that of the Tsar. Government had been decentralised by the division of Russia into eight provinces: Moscow, Ingermanland (afterwards the province of St. Petersburg), Kief, Smolensk, Archangel, Kazan, Azof, and Siberia, each of which had its Governor who was personally responsible to the Tsar. Church affairs were in the hands of Stephen Yavorsky, but a monasterial commission had been founded to take possession of all ecclesiastical property and manage it. This was almost a branch of the Ministry of Finance, for it was used to seize the revenues of the Church for the exchequer. Law was enforced

by four types of punishment: banishment, torture, abolition of rights, death. Prisons were mostly antechambers to the torture-chamber. Banishment to Siberia or the north became less common. Penal servitude was served on the Neva marshes in the construction of Petersburg.

The Tsar, either because he chose well, or because of a certain loyalty of nature, was very steadfast in the retention of the services of those about him. The manifest exceptions lie in his treatment of Anna Mons, whom he cast off rather shabbily, and of Andrew Vinius, who fell into disgrace and found he could not bribe his way back to favour. Catherine took Anna's place. The place of Vinius was taken by the young interpreter Shafirof, who obtained the control of the Ministry of Posts and Mail.

Moscow was in a state of some confusion. Building had come to a standstill owing to the fact that the Tsar took every skilled workman for his new city in the north. Peter became cold towards Moscow and viewed with disfavour any attempt at architectural improvement. It was not long before he decreed that no more stone buildings should be erected there. Its nobility, even those most loyal to him, were dismayed at the idea of removing their families to Petersburg. The Tsar might call it Paradise; they thought of it as hell. But his will seemed clear, and in their experience of him he did not waver.

In 1710 all members of the Imperial Family went to the new city. It was not ready for them and they did not stay. But Peter took pleasure in choosing sites for palaces and fashionable houses.

Moscow was incurably old-fashioned. The decrees regarding dress and hair were of course obeyed by the gentry, the officials, and the clerks. But the working class and peasants were not easily converted

into "Germans." Large numbers elected to keep their beards and wear the tax-token pinned on them. But of those who surrendered their hair there were few whose attire was all in one style. New cloth sat ill on the old garments. The roadways of Moscow reflected the sartorial disorder. In 1705 the Tsar had ordered the wooden roadways to be torn up and replaced by cobble-stones. It was too great a task. The inhabitants gladly used the old wood for fuel until forbidden to do so. The work of paving the roads was prolonged and disorderly. And in 1710 many streets remained partly covered with torn wood and partly with stone. Then the Tsar thought of a better destination for the stone—Petersburg. His name meant stone. His city must have stone streets too.

A great fire destroyed the chief emporiums in St. Petersburg in 1710. In one night the whole of the Gostinny Dvor was burned down. Several hundred shops and stalls made of wood and canvas caught fire. There was no means of coping with the flames. The panic was great. Each shopkeeper tried, by dashing in, to save his own goods, and wild spirits from the Labour camps took the chance to plunder what they could. At each corner of the black to charred market-place next day Peter had new scaffolds erected, and a robber was hanged on each. But the moral of the catastrophe was expressed in Peter's ukase—that there should be more stone and less wood.

The many new laws and regulations proved difficult to enforce. The new local authority of the Governor of the Province clashed with the old authority of the capital. It has been observed that Russia at this time was without a capital. Moscow had ceased to be the capital and St. Petersburg was not ready. But few true Moscovites could have anticipated that the sovereign would abandon the sacred Kremlin, its

palaces and cathedral and historical associations, for some Dutchman's paradise. Such an affront to Russia was inconceivable.

But no one had the backbone to oppose himself to Peter's whim. The fear of being broken on the wheel was too great. The Tsar's laconic and mis-spelt decrees were carried out. An idle sentence written by him when drunk caused misery to thousands, but it was not questioned. His Ministers were capable but slavish, and having their private opinion regarding the advisability of measures, nevertheless chose the easier task of obeying their master rather than the more dangerous one of thwarting him or advising alternative courses.

The advantages of Europeanisation were slow to accrue. But books printed in the Russian language were beginning to appear. Peter was the godfather of Russian literature. Before him there were no books. The centuries had been silent: no age of Dante, no age of Shakespeare or of Milton. The new beginning was perhaps dull. In 1708 appeared a book on geometry and land survey, and it was followed by the "Complete Letter Writer," a translation from the German of a guide to the writing of congratulations, compliments, proposals of marriage, invitations, and so forth. This had to be taken by Russian families as a text-book.

Peter then sent to Moscow a history of the Trojan War to be translated and printed. He ordered a history of Russia. He had two thousand calendars printed for the Army. Zotof's son had to translate a work on fortifications. A history of Alexander of Macedon was printed at the Tsar's behest. In the *Russian Gazette*, the first newspaper, appeared accounts of the casting of new cannon, the progress of recruiting, reports of the conflict with Sweden, and numbers of

translations from the German. These were all printed in what was called "civil type," as distinguished from Church Slavonic. It is the familiar modern Russian type which endured until the Revolution of 1918, when some redundant letters were abolished.

In an endeavour to raise the general level of education many schools were opened. In these Russian teachers were largely supplemented by foreigners. Those Swedish prisoners who happened to be educated or to have any special craft or skill were offered employment in the schools. Here again there was much confusion owing to the use of foreign jargon, greatly encouraged by the example of the Tsar himself. A theatre was opened in the Red Square, under the Kremlin walls, and German plays were produced. The nation had no dramatist.

After the New Year and Poltava festivities Peter was only anxious to get back to Petersburg. The edifices of Moscow affronted his Western mind. The elaborate Byzantinism of the cathedral of St. Basil might appeal to those who still chose to wear Russian clothes, but he would have nothing of that kind in his name-city. It should be severe and classical. It should be massive; its lines should be simple. It would be an example for all Russia, the new Amsterdam of the north. His own Zaandam model home, with its little casement windows, was the astonishment of foreign skippers, who could not believe that the great "Czar of Muscovy" lived in a workman's dwelling. But Peter's modesty was not intended as an example. His nobles were expected to pay for the construction of houses not unlike those of the English gentry in Soho and St. James's. Peter's blank roof was moreover devoid of vent. But it was a city of chimneys that he envisaged. The winter camp on the Neva of thousands of workmen became

almost as extensive as the city itself. The barracks and huts multiplied. There was an incessant clangour of axes, for work went on day and night. Pitch, of which there was a vast supply, was poured on to heaps of wood, and by red smoking fires over the whiteness of snow the work went on. The little ponies with sledges of cement, gravel, stone, brick, scurried over the ice. Swedes, Russians, Cossacks, Poles, Kalmouks mingled as at the building of Babel. Peter in top-boots and reindeer skin, cudgel in hand, strode from site to site and workshop to workshop. Little was missed by his watchful eye. Everyone knew the terrible man was there. Corpses swinging on gibbets reminded of him day and night. Only wolves and winter thwarted the builders, but these he overcame. Thus "Paradise" was built—Petersburg became.

Attack through Finland upon this pleasaunce was not entirely guaranteed by the defeat of Sweden. The first strong position north of Petersburg was Viborg, which the Tsar ordered to be taken so that he might have "a big pillow" for his new city, by which he meant a buffer on which the force of an invading Swedish army could spend itself. Fedor Apraxin therefore besieged and took Viborg.[1] It is probable that the conquest of Finland by Russia was entirely due to the building of Petersburg. But for Petersburg Russia would not have been troubled for two centuries by the thorny task of administering the law to such a very foreign people as the Finns.

During the summer of 1710 the whole of eastern Finland, known as Karelia, was conquered by the Tsar's generals. And across the sea Riga also fell. Pernau, Erensburg, and Revel surrendered.[2] Sweden remained without territory in the countries now known as Esthonia and Latvia, then respectively Livonia and

[1] June. [2] July.

Courland. The Russians were lenient in their terms to the besieged. Freedom of religion and language was guaranteed, and the Tsar engaged to do much for the encouragement of the University of Pernau, hoping to assist, not merely for the benefit of Letts and Lithuanians and Poles and Baltic Germans, but for the enlightenment of his uncultured Russian subjects. He intended to make Courland a Russian Protectorate, re-establishing the young Duke of Courland, Friedrich Wilhelm, as petty sovereign of the State. With that in view, Friedrich Wilhelm was affianced and married to his niece Anna, one of his brother Ivan's daughters.

One of the terms in the settlement demanded by the Duke of Courland was a dowry of two hundred thousand roubles. It must be thought that Peter had a reputation for immense wealth, and that there existed some legend of the treasures of Moscow. Perhaps the parade of the nobles with pearls in their hats gave the German princes the idea that Russia had great wealth. They were all evidently rather out of pocket themselves. And Peter chose rather to seem a miser than to plead poverty. He certainly could not find two hundred thousand roubles for the Duke of Courland, but he did not actually refuse his demand. Instead, he divided the sum into two parts. Forty thousand roubles would be dowry. The remaining one hundred and sixty thousand roubles would be a loan to the Duke at five per cent., the interest being paid to Anna. The one hundred and sixty thousand should be used to buy back the ducal estates, and these, as reclaimed, should be vested personally in Anna as security. Fifty thousand roubles should be paid on the day of marriage, and the balance as soon as possible.

In the framing of this contract the Tsar's secretary,

Makarof, had doubtless considerable share. It is somewhat more elaborate and sophisticated than Peter's laconic ways with his allies would suggest. But in the midst of the elaboration of the plans for the new Protectorate the Tsar was called to something more urgent and serious, the threat of war by Turkey, urged on by the fugitive Charles.

XXXIII

PETER now committed an error of judgment which almost ruined his military career. Flushed with victory over Sweden, he under-estimated the power of the Turks.

The Sultan had unwillingly given Charles the Twelfth refuge. That the Swede was in arms against the common enemy, Russia, did not weigh in his favour, for the Turks, though preparing for another war with the historic foe, did not seek Christian allies. Hospitality is sacred to the Mahometans, but the presence of the Swedish King with an armed band was embarrassing. Peter, through his Ministers, demanded the expulsion of Charles. But such a demand was evidently offensive to the Porte, which replied complaining of the incursion of Russian troops pursuing the Swedes into Turkish territory. A characteristic competition in bribery had ensued, Peter Tolstoy, the Russian Ambassador at Constantinople, corrupting one Vizier, Charles corrupting another. Mazeppa died in the autumn following the battle of Poltava, escaping by a natural death the possibility of the gallows or the wheel. His counsel was lost, but his eighty thousand ducats proved useful to the Swede. And the brothers Cook, English bankers in Constantinople, favoured him and afforded him accommodation to the extent of two hundred thousand thalers. Nevertheless the Russians had more gold than he at their disposal, and almost succeeded in having Charles conducted to the frontier

and handed over to a contingent of Menshikof's army which would escort him across Poland. But the King of Sweden was successful in getting a denunciation of the Grand Vizier direct into the Sultan's hands. The Vizier was displaced, and a successor favourable to Charles stood at the Sultan's right hand.

The Turkish forces in Rumania and Bessarabia were mobilised.[1] Tolstoy was obliged to ride half-naked through the streets of Constantinople, to be laughed at and spat upon by the populace. Then he was thrown into prison. And war against Russia was declared.

An immense army of Turks and Tartars was gathered, and the campaign began with all the ecstasy and fury of which the Moslem was capable. Peter's error lay in thinking that his victorious troops could invade the enemy's territory and in one set battle resolve the whole quarrel. He abandoned the Russian strategy of caution, sacrifice, and patience. His real interest was no longer in the south.

It was a difficult task, in the middle of winter, to transfer units from the Baltic shores to the Black Sea. A first force of ten squadrons of cavalry was at once sent to the Dniester. Sheremetief followed more leisurely, marching with twenty-two regiments of foot. Romodanovsky led the Guard regiments out from Moscow. The military preparations were making great progress when the Tsar fell ill once more.[2] "I have never been so ill since I was born," he wrote to Menshikof. "I gave up hope of life," he wrote to another. He suffered this attack at Lutsk in southern Poland, and was confined to his couch for three weeks. Catherine was with him. His life was almost shaken out of him in his convulsions. Retention of wind and blood trouble caused him great pain and weakness.

[1] November. [2] 9th April, 1711.

The crisis passed with profuse sweat, but the Tsar's convalescence was not so rapid as after his previous illness. On the advice of a German doctor he decided to go and take a cure at Carlsbad when opportunity occurred.

Although no doubt confident that he could defeat the Turks, Peter was disappointed in the lack of allies. Denmark had been seriously defeated in the field by a Swedish army. Augustus felt he ought to hold the Poles in reserve. The only support from outside came from the oppressed Slavs of the Balkan Peninsula. The Serbs and Montenegrins were ready to co-operate if there were a chance to throw off the odious Moslem yoke. Peter found it politic to encourage them, and enjoyed the rôle of posing as the protector of the Slav nations of the Balkans. It served him little, but it had consequences in history. The seeds of Pan-Slavism were sown.

Peter sent urgent messages to Sheremetief bidding him hasten his advance. The deeper the Russians could penetrate into the Turkish dominions the greater number of sympathising Slavs and Christians would rally to their standard. But Sheremetief was slow. The main army of the Turks reached and crossed the Danube before the Russians. Sheremetief complained of the absence of food for his men and fodder for his horses. The generals under him, mostly Germans, were in favour of remaining on the Dniester and awaiting the Turkish army there. That meant the abandonment of the Moldavian Slavs, who had proclaimed themselves for Peter, and the consequent massacre of their families and the destruction of their villages. The Tsar was angry but impotent. Finally, he was obliged to give in to Sheremetief, and halted him and his army on the River Pruth.

The Tsar, on his way to the front, signed the settlement for the marriage of the Tsarevitch Alexis to the German Princess Charlotte of Brunswick. The unfortunate Charlotte was a somewhat plain young woman with pock-marked face. The tutor of Alexis on a diplomatic mission in 1707 had suggested her as a suitable bride. The Tsar had agreed. In 1709 the Tsarevitch went to Dresden to study, and subsequently visited the castle of Wolfenbüttel, where he saw Charlotte. He was not particularly attracted by her, but surrendered to Peter's will and decided to take her to wife. The marriage, however, held political advantages, and it was expedited by the Tsar. The emissary from Wolfenbüttel arrived at Yarovov with the marriage deed, and found Peter, compass in hand, working upon plans for the siege of Balkan cities.

The Tsar still regarded Alexis as his successor. Catherine had as yet borne no male child. Had he at that time decided to alienate the Tsarevitch from the throne there would have been no urgency to get him married. Peter wished to safeguard the dynasty, and it is possible that he had hopes of a grandson of better metal than his son.

It was a year of safeguarding. In Moscow, before starting on the new campaign, he had instituted a Senate to govern in his absence. The Senate was composed of nine members and had an authority equal to that of the Tsar. Primarily it was an instrument of government to supply the need of the Tsar's presence in time of war. But in case of Peter's death, or his capture by the enemy, it could carry on Government, so lessening the chances of insurrection or violent upset. The names of its first members were: Count Musin-Pushkin, Streshnef, Prince Peter Golitsin, Prince Michael Dolgoruky, Plemmianikof,

Prince Gregory Volkhonsky, General Samarin, Opukhtin, and Melnitsky.

And having made this provision, the Tsar walked right into a trap. It is remarkable that with all his caution he allowed himself to be surrounded by the Turkish armies.[1] The disaster was due to divided command and to divided counsel. Northern Moldavia, including Jassy, was in the hands of the Russians; Peter's base camp was at Soroki on the Dniester. He had no ships at his disposal, or he would have learned more concerning the disposition of the Turkish armies coming up from the south. Little information was gleaned concerning the enemy's movements. The Turks crossed the Danube unmolested and swarmed northward along the shores of the lower Dniester, menacing Sheremetief's flank. Fortunately for Peter, Charles the Twelfth was not allowed any definite share in the Turkish victory. Had he got his enemy into such a position he would have had complete revenge. Together with his followers he awaited the result at Bender on the Dniester, a few days' march away.

The Tsar decided to join Sheremetief's army, and on the 24th June reached Jassy. The advance had been planned to follow the course of the River Pruth. Peter met Cantemir, the Hospodar or Governor of Moldavia, who, in the hope of obtaining independence for his people, was playing a double rôle, deceiving the Sultan and beguiling the Tsar. Cantemir raised exaggerated hopes of Slav support. The Moldavians, Wallachians, Serbs, Bulgars, Montenegrins of that time were only capable of complicating the simpler issue of a trial of strength between Turk and Russian.

Brancovano, the Hospodar of Wallachia, was in reality loyal to the Sultan, though many prominent

[1] 8th June.

Wallachians favoured the Tsar. The representative of the pro-Russian faction, Thomas Cantacuzin, joined Peter and persuaded him to promise to divert part of his army into Wallachia and help Brancovano to make up his mind, and to rouse the people as a whole. The Sultan showed his trust in Brancovano by using him as an intermediary to seek peace. This was doubtless merely Oriental finesse. The Turks outnumbered the Russians by five to one, and must have been confident of victory. Peter rejected the peace proposals and was confirmed in fool-hardiness. Taking Catherine with him, and Cantemir and Cantacuzin, he rode to the front to celebrate the anniversary of the victory of Poltava.[1]

There was a salute of sixty guns. There were religious services and parades, but no feasting, for a plague of locusts had descended upon Moldavia, and it was a hunger-stricken land. The problem of finding food was becoming greater than that of meeting the Turks. At a council of war on the day after the Poltava celebration it was decided to abandon the valley of the Pruth, which had become unfavourable for conflict owing to the extensive marshes which lay between the army and the confluence with the Danube. Sheremetief would now push westward along the Sereth into Wallachia, and if possible capture the large Turkish food supplies at Braila. General Renne was sent ahead with cavalry into the interior of Wallachia to stir up the people and to take Braila and raid all the provisions he could lay hold of. A rendezvous was made with him to rejoin the main army at Galatz.

Renne set off with his horsemen, and had success everywhere, taking Braila on the 10th July. The main army, leaving the Pruth, made a tactical error

[1] 27th June.

for which payment was soon exacted. The Grand Vizier and his janissaries crossed the Pruth in the rear of the Russian army. On the 7th July Sheremetief's army of forty thousand became encircled. Turks and Tartars to the extent of one hundred and ninety thousand men held them. Peter halted the advance and attempted a retreat to the northward. In the extremely bloody rearguard action the Russians fought with great courage, but the odds against them were too great. The enemy moreover held all the strong positions, including the high banks of the river.

Peter, greatly frightened, sought a safe-conduct for himself and Catherine. Apparently this could have been afforded by the Moldavian troops, who held a narrow exit to Moldavia. In that case the Turks did not completely encircle the Russians. The military situation was not completely surveyed. Peter was even unaware of the successes of General Renne. It seems not improbable that the Russian army could have fought its way out, either in direct retreat or by pushing forward to join Renne at Galatz. But the Tsar thought he was lost. He sent a letter to the Senate in Moscow giving instructions how to carry on in case he was taken prisoner. The Moldavians would not take on themselves the responsibility of allowing him to escape. He and his whole army were therefore entrapped.

The stooping Tsar, with glowering, twitching face, paced back and forth in his tent, and no one dare approach him, not even the nearest of his generals. Personal fear, impotent rage, the sense of having lost everything, the sense of a wild bear that he has fallen into a pit and will shortly be dispatched, surged through his being and spent itself physically in fierce convulsions. Catherine alone dare try to help him. And it is supposed to have been she who suggested

trying to buy the enemy out. The Tsar in later years, making her Empress, publicly thanked her for having on this occasion saved Russia and himself.

The Turks were not averse from concluding peace, or, in any case, from granting an armistice. They had full news of General Renne's successes, and did not think the Russian position to be quite hopeless. The Russians had fought with the courage of desperation and inflicted such losses on the huge Turkish army that it was not inclined to resume battle.

A Russian bugler sounded a parley, and a note was delivered addressed to the " Most Serene Vizier of the Majesty of the Sultan," deploring that the armies should be forced to extremes of bloodshed through a quarrel that was foreign in origin and not of the Tsar's wishing.[1]

There was no answer.

A second letter was sent, warning that war would be resumed with fury if within a few hours the Vizier failed to reply.

The Vizier then said he was willing to treat. Shafirof was thereupon sent with a commission to arrange terms. The extremity of Peter's condition can be judged by what he was ready to offer—the evacuation of Azof and Taganrog and the raising of the fortifications, the abandonment of all his conquests from Sweden except Ingria and, of course, Petersburg. " Do your best to mollify the Sultan; do as little as you can for the Swedes," was Peter's instruction. And to help him to win his way he placed large sums of money at his disposal. He was instructed to bribe everyone of importance from the Vizier downward.

The Russian gold proved very eloquent. The Vizier took a present of one hundred and fifty thousand roubles, his aide-de-camp sixty thousand, the com-

[1] 10th July.

mander of the janissaries ten thousand, and so on, down to interpreters and clerks—all delighted in the Tsar's bounty. Shafirof soon returned with the Turkish conditions of peace. Azof was to be restored to Turkey in the condition it was when captured by the Russians. Taganrog and other harbours and fortresses were to be dismantled. The Tsar would undertake for the future not to meddle in Polish affairs, nor to interfere with the Cossacks. The Tsar should grant the King of Sweden a safe-conduct back to Sweden and be ready to conclude peace with him. And the Sultan agreed to exclude the King henceforth from his territories.

Haste was important. Probably never in history, before or since that time, was peace concluded so rapidly between Russia and Turkey. The conditions were at once agreed to; the treaty was written and signed. Shafirof thereupon informed the Tsar that he and his army were free to withdraw.[1]

This sudden termination of the war was to no one more unexpected than to Charles the Twelfth. When the news came to him at Bender he jumped into the saddle and rode all day and all night to the camp of the Turks. Booted and spurred and spattered with mud, he arrived at the Vizier's tent and threw himself in rage on the divan before him, reproaching him and threatening him. He knew well that the Vizier had been bought, and proclaimed his intention of denouncing him to the Sultan.

At that moment the Russian army was marching out and he could hear their drum beats as they rolled away. He knew that Peter had got away and that destiny had cheated him. His frenzy did not, however, move the Vizier, who looked down upon him with solemn reserve.

[1] 12th July.

"You should have taken the Tsar prisoner and held him to ransom. You should have exacted tribute from Moscow. You should have ordered the army to lay down its arms."

"Your Majesty remains the guest of His Most Serene Sultanic Majesty, but it is unfitting that a guest should be the cause of great bloodshed. The season has come when it is fitting you should depart honourably for your own country and make peace with your enemy, with whom, to that end, we have signed a treaty."

Peter got safely away, but it was not the intention of Charles to be seized and sent to Poland. So he abruptly quitted the unprofitable Vizier and returned to Bender, there to offer his service to the Khan of Tartary.

XXXIV

The Tsar and Catherine journeyed by way of Kief to Warsaw. They made merry in the capital of Poland.[1] Peter seldom allowed a yesterday to darken a morrow. He was not depressed by his defeat on the Pruth nor humiliated by the ignominious terms of the treaty. Be it said, he was in no hurry to fulfil the terms. He resolved to wait until the Turks carried out their part of the bargain and banished his adversary Charles the Twelfth from their lands. For the rest, the masts of Voronezh might now languish, but the masts of the Baltic should multiply. He saw his destiny in the north, not in the south, and intended to pursue his conquests there as soon as he had rested and his health was completely restored.

In quest of better health he set off from Warsaw for Carlsbad, leaving Catherine at Thorn with a battalion to guard her. He crossed Silesia in a stage-coach and reached Dresden on the 9th September.[2] There he foregathered with Augustus, and the two monarchs at table amused themselves crumpling up silver in their strong hands. Peter had been agreeably surprised that the Turks had not stipulated in their treaty that he should recognise Stanislas as King of Poland. But he had been called upon to evacuate all Russian troops from Poland. That suited the Tsar's immediate policy, for he intended to proceed to war via Pomerania. But he wished he could count on the independent co-operation of Augustus. He is sup-

[1] August. [2] 9th September.

posed to have said, though it seems rather childish: "Separately we can crush silver plate; together we might do the same to Swedish steel."

Another matter he had to discuss was the political advantage which might accrue from the marriage of Alexis to Charlotte. He planned to have the marriage solemnised in the following month at Carlsbad. Alexis had been told to repair thither, and, submissive to his father's will, was ready to submit to an unprofitable yoke.

Meanwhile, the waters! The Tsar's health was not improving. Perhaps the good table of Augustus and the customary rivalry in drinking aggravated his trouble. He was in no condition for arduous travel, and at Oberweisen had to be carried out of the coach and put on a stretcher. Bearers carried him like a dead man almost the whole of the rest of the way to Carlsbad. But pride forbade that he should make his entry prostrate. So within sight of the city he transferred again to a coach.

He went into lodgings, ordered the windows to be sealed and the heat increased, then took to bed for ten days. On the first day he drank fifteen mugs of "sprudel" brought to him at his bedside. This medicinal potation was increased gradually to forty mugs a day. Towards the end of September he recovered his strength. He took baths. Vigour returned rapidly, and he changed his mind regarding the wedding. Alexis remained idly at the house of the Queen of Poland at Torgau on the Elbe. Charlotte was there also. He decided therefore to repair thither with all speed and have the wedding ceremony performed. Within a week of his recovery he set off for the Elbe and sailed to Torgau for the wedding.

Russia had hoped that Alexis would marry a Russian. Many national wrongs found prospect of

being righted in the heir to the throne. His taste was more Russian than his father's. He was reputed to hate Germans, and though he was of too weak a temperament to hate or love anyone continuously, he was probably indifferent to foreigners. He admired his father, but was appalled by him. There seemed to be consciousness of personal disgrace in the disparity of capacity in father and son. He possessed Peter's lineaments. His face was a frightful burlesque of that of his father. The shadow of his father's rages was reflected in his face. His features did not twitch, but fear was congealed in them.

As the son of another monarch—for instance, of his grandfather Alexis—he might have developed very creditably. Possessing a home and a mother and a normal father, he would have been different. But his mother had had little chance to be a mother to him and care for him. What stood for home was the pandemonium of Preobrazhenskoe with its bacchanalia, its frightening mockeries and barbarous cruelties. The father was executioner, torturer, habitual cudgeller, a man of frenzies, of will that could not be gainsaid, terrible. The virtues of Peter did not shine forth in the entourage of the boy. Alexis shrank from the Tsardom; he heard the whispers of all who shrank from it. His normal development was frustrated by Peter's Court, and he took the obvious refuge of the frustrated—drink, books, the company of the discontented, the counsel of monks and priests, confession and prayer.

He was too weak to rebuke those who said, " It will all be different when you are Tsar; you will chase away the hateful foreigners, you will restore the old customs," weak enough even to agree in a moment of inclination when a priest remarked that it might be better for Russia if Peter were removed.

But within the limits of his capacity Alexis was loyal to his father, even co-operative with him. He did not stand up once for his mother; he was sincerely friendly to the Tsar's chosen mistress and consort, Catherine. Though of a decidedly unwarlike disposition, he rendered good services in raising new regiments and bringing them to his father. He did a great deal of Quartermaster-General work behind the lines. Although his favourite reading was the lives of the Saints, Byzantine lore, and the Bible, he made researches in military subjects and mastered all there was to know about the technical side of fortification. That he had read the Bible through five times shows the loneliness and sadness of the adolescent heir. He sought ever spiritual consolation.

His loyalty to his father's career shone greatest at the time of the Poltava celebrations in Moscow. He acted as host. He had arranged the greater part of the festive programme. Moscow responded to him with gladness, for it saw in him a redeeming feature of the dynasty. He was of great use to Peter, for he was, in the popular eye, a balance to Peter, a guarantee that the brutal whims of the Tsar were merely whims and not liable to be made absolute for all time. So in the Poltava demonstrations the picture of Alexis was borne about with plaudits and song. The popular toast was not so much "Long life to the Tsar!" as "Long life to the Tsar and to his noble heir, Alexis!" Alexis Petrovitch was the counter-balance and historical fulfilment of Peter Alexeevitch.

The Tsar's early correspondence with his son was brief, businesslike and matter-of-fact, devoid of affection or endearments as also of threats of punishment. His chief anxiety was the direction of his studies. He tried to remedy in his son the appalling carelessness of

education which he had endured when he was heir. Peter went to life to learn, but he sedulously sent his son to books. Peter knew smatterings of foreign tongues, but he was desirous that his son should speak the chief languages of Europe well. It must often have occurred to him that there was little hope that Alexis would carry on the work he had begun in Russia, and that he could not build on him. But he was discreet, and kept his own counsel in that matter. Once, when a drunken courtier cried out, "Who will govern us when you are gone? You leave no one behind," he rebuked him.

"What you say may be true," Peter remarked, "but it is not fitting that it should be said in public."

It seemed to Peter that the best way to commit Alexis to Westernism would be to marry him to a foreigner. If he married a Russian the alliance would play into the hands of the disgruntled Nationalists. There would be once more Court intrigue and possibly armed rebellion. Hence Charlotte of Brunswick as consort. If Alexis begot a son, he would be half German, he would have a German education and an immense number of German kinsfolk. From the date of the marriage Peter began to call Alexis the Crown Prince instead of the Tsarevitch, and Charlotte the Crown Princess. Some notion of a semi-German dynasty was in his mind.

The soul of Alexis was largely in the keeping of his confessor, Father Jacob Ignatief, who knew his heart-searchings concerning this German bride. But the Church could not brook Peter's will. The Church counselled procrastination, and Alexis was of that idle, irresolute sort that keeps postponing choice of destiny. His father closed up the avenue of escape.

There is something pitiful in the pre-nuptial mission of Alexis. When the deed of settlement was

drawn up the Germans stipulated that a wedding gift of twenty-five thousand roubles must be made to Charlotte, and that the Tsar should pay her annually the sum of fifty thousand roubles. The Tsarevitch was sent to Charlotte's relatives to try and make them take less—cut down the annuity to forty thousand roubles. This they absolutely refused, nor would they agree that her pension be diminished in case of the death of the Tsarevitch. "I've tried very hard to get them to ask less," he wrote to his father.

Charlotte was a relative of Augustus and brought up in his domestic circle. They were accustomed to get money from the Tsar, and probably saw in the alliance not political and dynastic, but financial gain.

Now that the marriage was inevitable the Confessor Ignatief wrote to Alexis, urging the necessity of his bride's conversion to the Orthodox Church. But Peter was not anxious about that, and allowed the Princess to retain her Evangelical faith, stipulating only that the children be brought up in Orthodoxy. "I can't force her," wrote Alexis, "but who knows, when she comes to live among us and looks round, may she not herself come over?"

The Germans found Alexis very charming: he was educated, he had good manners, and he was sociable and friendly. He had none of his father's embarrassing unexpectedness and barbarous extravagance of mirth. The match was popular. Many impoverished German gentlemen decided to live at the expense of the Russian Court. But the Tsarevitch on the brink of matrimony was timid and devoid of passion. Hence, in part, his good manners. Peter, with his bloated face, bristling cat's whiskers, and audacious eyes, put a different complexion on affairs when he arrived at the Castle. He had no time to spare.

Invitations to guests were at once dispatched, pastors and priests bidden, documents produced. After all the correspondence and preparations, extending over many months, something in the nature of an impromptu wedding was effected.[1] "Messrs. Senate, I beg to notify you that the marriage of my son was accomplished here to-day at Torgau in the house of the Polish Queen, a fair number of distinguished people being present. Thank God that this has been happily accomplished. Our kinsfolk of the house of the princes of Wolfenbüttel are tolerably respectable."

The wedding festivities lasted three days, and on the fourth Peter ordered the bridegroom to go to Thorn and occupy himself with the provisioning of the army for the northern campaign. Disturbing news had come to the Tsar. The mixed armies of Russians, Saxons, and Danes besieging Stralsund were at odds through jealous commanders, and no military action worth the name was being taken. The north rose urgently in Peter's mind, and the importance of his son's marriage faded. He at once left Torgau for Crossen at the frontier of Brandenburg, a rendezvous having been made with the Saxon general Fleming and two Ministers of the Danish crown.[2] There he convinced them that Stralsund must be taken and military and naval action in the following spring must be begun betimes.

Achieving agreement on these matters, he betook himself to Catherine's bower. She had been waiting patiently at Thorn the last six weeks. When the Tsar arrived there on the 27th October the Tsarevitch had not yet come. It was another week before he came. For he had been trying to arrange to bring his wife. Charlotte had ordered a travelling bed, but this luxury had not been delivered. For that reason

[1] 14th October. [2] 22nd October.

she remained at Torgau, and Alexis set off alone. Thus, it is said, estrangement began. But the marriage had been consummated, and the chief object of the union being a grandchild for Peter, there seemed no particular objection to their separation. It was not until the 19th December that Charlotte joined him at Thorn. They were allowed four months together before the Tsar separated them once more. There was speculation as to whether Charlotte had become pregnant, and Alexis wrote to his confessor, "As regards conception in the womb, and the hope to see me a parent, I declare that it was quite impossible, before my departure, to know for certain. But I have ordered my wife, as soon as she has knowledge, to write to me without delay. So, as soon as I receive news, is there anything or not, I will hasten to acquaint your Holiness."

Peter, having satisfied himself that his son had taken up his military duties, travelled north via Königsberg and Riga to Petersburg, where he remained all the winter. The walls of Catherine's palace, the Ekaterinhofsky, began to arise. In February his marriage to Catherine was publicly celebrated in the new city. He proclaimed a dissolute old lady, Rzhevskaya, arch-priestess of mirth—"Princess-Abbess"—and he began to sketch in her part in the Bacchic rituals.

XXXV

PETER was forced to carry out the first provision of his peace treaty with Turkey. His ports and forts upon the Sea of Azof were dismantled. It was only with tears that he made the final renunciation. His envoys to the Sultan had been unable to ensure the expulsion of Charles the Twelfth. War on a much larger scale was threatened if the treaty conditions were not observed to the letter. When the work of destruction at Azof and Taganrog had been completed, and the Russian families forcibly exiled there were all rendered destitute, and the fleet at Voronezh had become derelict, the Viziers turned their attention to the next provision of the treaty, and objected violently to the presence of Russian troops in Poland. The Turks were in high spirits and clamorous for war. They had little interest in the fortunes of Poland, and they were indifferent to the fate of Charles the Twelfth. The Poles themselves had no objection to the presence of Peter's troops as long as they paid for their food. But the Turks were ready to renew the war if the evacuation was not completed.

The Turkish mufti was bribed by the Russians, but also with an equal sum by the Swedes. Fortunately for Russia, the War of the Spanish Succession was being fought in Constantinople also. France was vigorously on the side of Charles the Twelfth, but England and Holland were automatically opposed to French policy, and though they did not favour Peter

in his Baltic conquests, they supported him at the Porte, and they were more powerful than France. A proposal to send Charles into Poland with an army of forty-five thousand Moslems was defeated through Anglo-Dutch representations, and on the 5th April the threat of renewed war was withdrawn. A new treaty of peace was drawn up. Its first clause was, however, almost impossible of observance. The Tsar promised to withdraw all his troops from Poland within a month, and not to invade the country again unless the presence of Charles the Twelfth there demanded it.

By the second clause the Turks reserved the right to banish or not banish Charles the Twelfth, to keep him with them as long as they thought fit or to afford him a safe-conduct, even through Russian territory, escorted by a Turkish army.

By the third clause the Tsar was bound to respect the autonomy of the Cossacks and Ukrainians of the lower Dniester. Russian dominion would not extend further south than the Government of Kief. By the fourth clause he obliged himself to refrain from building fortresses on the Don.

It was a humiliating peace. It was signed. The ambassador Tolstoy, who had suffered miserably for nearly eighteen months in a dungeon-prison, was at last released, but still held as a hostage in case some of the conditions of the new treaty were not fulfilled.

The chief difficulty in the observance of this treaty remained the first clause. The Russian army in Pomerania could not withdraw without using Polish territory in transit, nor could reinforcements be sent. And in any case the Tsar had no intention of quitting the siege of Stralsund nor of lifting the blockade of Stettin and Wismar. He had abandoned the south,

and though in dismantling the Azof fortresses he had given instructions to leave the foundations intact, hoping to return and grasp the lost territory, he did not meditate a further war with Turkey. Poland also had little interest for him except as a base. But he did believe he could drive the Swedes from the southern shores of the Baltic. For the north he would make sacrifices, but not for the south.

Directly upon signing the new treaty of peace with Turkey he made Petersburg his capital. It was the most unpopular thing he ever did, but, then, he never considered public opinion, neither of the nobility nor of the masses. Petersburg was in 1712 quite unfitted to be the seat of Government, being only in process of being built. It could not house the great departments. Even the Senate was obliged to remain at Moscow. But instead of the Tsar going to Moscow to see his Ministers, they had more commonly to come to him. Upon occasion the whole Senate had to leave Moscow and journey north to discuss matters with the Tsar.

The Tsar's political reforms were working smoothly. The eight new Governments provided eight centres for collecting money and recruits. Peter felt that he could now dispense with Kurbatof, and sent him to be Vice-Governor of Archangel, a curious act of ingratitude towards the man who had rendered such invaluable financial service. Perhaps the Tsar took a personal dislike to him because of his sickly sentimental letters of devotion, the cringing mentality of the ex-serf. Kurbatof was surprised and mortified by being sent to the north. Peter assured him it was no disgrace, but it was a waste of his talent. For with the rise of Petersburg the importance of Archangel was declining. Autocrats have a way of sacrificing subjects who think themselves indispensable—

"You think you are indispensable, whereas only I am indispensable."

Stephen Yavorsky, who constantly criticised the Tsar in his sermons, professed to be always eager to retire, to go into the wilderness to lead an ascetic's life. Probably this readiness to go saved him from the effects of the Tsar's undoubted displeasure.

Peter Tolstoy, when he was released from the Prison of the Seven Towers in Constantinople, petitioned, "with bloody tears," to be withdrawn from service in an "infernal country." To this request the Tsar acceded. But it was an exception. He seldom listened to the desire for rest and peace expressed by those who had grown old or sick on duty. The Tsar was often in ill-health, but for anyone else to be in ill-health angered him. The ill-health of Vinius, more than his corruptibility, disgraced him.

He would have liked Alexis more had he been more vigorous. That he got easily drunk, that he could not wield an axe or a cudgel, and was incapable of living the arduous life of a common soldier, that he was pious and meek and over-obedient, weighed heavily against him. Peter's insensate malice against him may have been slow to develop, but it was there all the time. Though for State reasons he wished the marriage of Alexis and Charlotte, his ill-feeling towards his son was increased by it. He had no consideration for hymeneal happiness. Possibly he grudged his heir a legitimate alliance which he, with Catherine, could not be judged to have. The Russian nobility in general considered her merely as his mistress, to be discarded sooner or later, and the more he clung to her the less contact he had with them. His public marriage to Catherine in 1712 was probably his answer to the nobility and also a counterbalance to his son's wedding at Torgau.

No worthy accommodation for Alexis and Charlotte was provided at Petersburg. The neglect was remarkable. No State entry either into the new capital or the old was arranged for the Tsarevitch and his bride. In the miserable frontier town of Thorn they were allowed to languish without money and without comfort. The Tsarevitch was kept on short commons, and the annuity supposed to be paid to his wife was withheld. Rations were not even supplied them from the army commissariat. Menshikof, when sent to them in April, found them living the simple life, with the barest table, and having neither horse nor carriage. Charlotte kept asking money from him, and, greatly shocked, Alexashka lent her five thousand roubles.

But Menshikof bore a ukase from Peter to Alexis: he was commanded to proceed immediately and join the Russian army in Pomerania. Upon consideration of this command, Charlotte decided to go to Elbing, near Dantzig. Elbing was a key city of the north, which, together with a small tract of country extending from the Vistula to Pomerania, it was proposed to give to Prussia as a bait. The assistance of the fine Prussian army was greatly coveted by Peter. Nevertheless Charlotte's stay at Elbing had no diplomatic significance. She merely awaited there the payment of her annuity and her husband's release from the war.

XXXVI

HAVING been defeated by the Turks on the Pruth and signed such an abject treaty of peace, Peter had lost prestige, and he did not enter the northern campaign as a directing influence. Saxons, Danes and Russians had their separate interests and could not effectively unite. The Swedes, though weak, were tenacious. They also needed a leader. The diverse objectives of the allied armies were the island of Rugen, Wismar, and Stralsund. Augustus and his Saxons wanted the island, the Danes wanted Wismar, which was nearest Denmark, and the Russians Stralsund, which was nearest to their other Baltic conquests.

England frowned on the whole affair and threatened intervention and contributed to throw the issue into doubt. The spring campaign was half-hearted. Denmark insisted upon prosecuting her own local interests and diverted her whole military energy to the western region. Menshikof was besieging Stettin, but was impotent, because the Danes had withdrawn their artillery.[1] The Tsar hastened to Menshikof to order the assault with his customary vigour, but could do nothing for lack of guns. In reply to representations the King of Denmark said it was the part of the Saxons to supply the Russians with artillery. The whole summer passed without effective action of any kind. Peter was greatly depressed. He missed the tonic of progress and victory, and again fell ill.

He decided to return to Carlsbad. With his army

[1] June.

and Menshikof, and keeping Alexis with him, he celebrated the anniversary of the battle of Lesnoi.[1] To what extent Peter shared in the great drinking bout is not recorded, but on the day after he abruptly left his friends, to go and take another cure. He journeyed via Berlin and Leipzig, in leisurely fashion, taking four weeks to get to Carlsbad, his health improving as he went and giving him no cause to hasten.

There was much curiosity regarding the Tsar at Berlin, especially as regards his manners. Peter had no patience with the parade and trappings of Prussian royalty, and on being asked to luncheon by Frederick the First, failed to take his place at table. He had started on his way, and then, feeling indisposed to face the music, turned back and went to his own quarters to eat. However, he did appear at the grand dinner that night, and borrowed a dirty glove to put on the hand of the arm he would have to offer to the Queen, taking her into the banqueting hall. It was observed that he did not indulge in lecherous remarks to the ladies, that he did not pick his teeth with his fingers nor break wind. "Il n'a ni roté, ni peté, ni ne s'est curé les dents."

He led the Queen out to the drawing-room with much grace. Every one was charmed. But upon her Majesty asking a favour of him, that he would cause to be released General Rensheld, a Swedish officer who had long been his prisoner, he abruptly turned his back on her and walked away without further ceremony.

There were possibly State reasons for Peter's visit to Berlin. He was always in quest of new allies, a curious feature in the character of a man who was privately so self-reliant. Prussia could be very useful in the campaign against Sweden and might possibly

[1] 28th September.

be territorially bribed. But Frederick the First was an old man and not very susceptible to suggestion. More might be attained after his death, in converse with his successor, should complete victory over the Swedes still remain to be achieved.

The Tsar's visit to Carlsbad was also a pretext for minor diplomatic conversations. As he arrived there in good health there was no necessity to take to bed, as in the previous year. Instead, he enjoyed a holiday. The town did him honour. He was perhaps surprised to discover that as a result of the marriage of Alexis and Charlotte he was considered a greater man. Charlotte was the sister of the Empress of Austria; that made a great difference in Carlsbad.

Peter sampled the amusements of the Spa and was introduced to the shooting club, where he made excellent target practice, and in the annual competition actually won the case of fine Rhine wine presented to the marksman who showed the best score. His bullet-marked target is still preserved. It is possible that the other sportsmen allowed him to win. They arranged such matters for sovereigns at that time.

The Tsar also indulged in a little bricklaying, and interfered with various working-men, one of whom, laughing at him, got a buffet from the Tsaristic fist. Peter walked a great deal and climbed the hills about the town. On a wooden cross, quite like a modern tourist, he cut certain letters with his knife—M.S.P.I. —which has been interpreted Manu sua Petrus Imperator. This remained one of the "sights" of Carlsbad for many years. When the cross got shabby and had to be replaced, the authorities saw to it that M.S.P.I. was cut on the new one too.

A constant companion of Peter at Carlsbad was

Baron Gottfried von Leibnitz, then rather an old man, but boyish in his enthusiasm for great men. The famous scientist and philosopher was being employed on a secret mission by the Emperor Charles the Sixth of Austria, to sound the Tsar as to a treaty with the Empire. Peter avoided discussing this matter, as he did not consider that Austria could be of much use to him in forwarding his northern ambitions. But, instead, he discussed problems of mathematics and science, and asked advice, with a certain mock humility, as to what he should now do for his people.

"Build academies and universities in St. Petersburg, Moscow, Astrakhan, and Kief," was the reply of Leibnitz.

The German was greatly impressed by Peter, as he had been by Charles the Twelfth before him. He saw in the Tsar one whom God had ordained to the end that a great people might become fruitful in civilisation. Enlightened foreigners generally saw in Peter a personal intervention of Providence in the destiny of Russia. It was only his own people who saw in him the devil or Antichrist.

Protestants saw in him the spirit of Luther and the Reformation, and Peter was beguiled while on this German holiday to go to Wittenburg. There they showed him the room where the devil faced Luther and the reformer threw the inkpot at him. The Tsar examined the inkspots on the wall, and was evidently incredulous. When asked to sign the visitor's book he took a crayon and wrote: "The story is false; the inkstains are new." And he went out forthwith to inspect the fortifications of the town.

His mind was occupied more with war than with religion. His health was good. He recovered his spirits, and thought only how the year could be redeemed by some great autumn victory. The

Swedish Field-Marshal Stenbock was marching from Pomerania into Mecklenburg with eighteen thousand men. There was an opportunity now to come to a final issue with Sweden. For Stenbock had mobilised all his resources. The Tsar advised the King of Denmark to unite his forces to the Russian army, and he wrote to Menshikof urging him to attack in God's name, without delay, even if he, Peter, should not have arrived on the scene.

Alexis remained with Menshikof's army and had not been allowed to return to his wife. Peter did not intend that the wedded pair should slip out of his power, and had no idea of allowing the Tsarevitch to rejoin his bride at Elbing. Her being there at all was distasteful to him. For one thing it advertised his niggardliness abroad. He did not wish it known that his heir was on soldier's pay and that he was backward in paying Charlotte's annuity. He therefore sent Brigadier Balk to Elbing [1] to make known his will to Charlotte, that she should repair at once to Russia. She replied:—

"I have not neglected the command of your most gracious Imperial Majesty, as I am in duty bound to obey, and I have been in readiness to depart from this place, but without money I have been unable to do so. I most humbly beg your Imperial Majesty not to be angry. As soon as money comes I shall carry out the command of your Imperial Majesty absolutely. I remain, with every most devoted respect, your most devoted and truly humble bride, Charlotte." [2]

The money did not come. Peter made a different plan, and that was to send Catherine and Alexis back to Russia, and they should call on the way and pick up Charlotte at Elbing. Charlotte waited a little

[1] October. [2] 28th October.

while, and then, finding suitable escort, set off in quite a different direction, went home to her parents in Brunswick, as it were "back to mother." Catherine and Alexis, arriving at Elbing in December, were too late. Charlotte had departed. The excuse that she had been short of money seemed to be unfounded, for it was further from Elbing to Wolfenbüttel than to Russia. Charlotte was apprehensive of Peter and his ways, and also of the discomforts of life among the Russians. Her flight home was natural enough, but the Tsar was very angry.

XXXVII

Stenbock began to deal with his enemies separately, and overthrew the Danish army at the battle of Gadebusch in December 1712, after which success he burned the town of Altona.

Peter journeyed from Carlsbad to Dresden. He left Dresden on the 8th November and drove to Berlin, and from Berlin went northward to his army in Mecklenburg, arriving at Gustrow about the end of the month. The Russians were within a day's march of the Danes, and together they could have successfully withstood Stenbock. The Tsar was somewhat indifferent to the fate of his allies, of whose fighting powers he had a low opinion. Russia, moreover, had little territorial interest so far west. It was chiefly the rumour that Charles the Twelfth, returning from Turkey, was expected to land in Holstein that kept Peter in the field. Charles the Twelfth was his personal enemy and must be reduced to insignificance. Frederick of Denmark, nearly captured in the rout of Gadebusch, hastened to Peter's camp at Gustrow and implored him to throw his army into the scale against the Swedish general. The Tsar agreed and invaded Holstein, inflicting a series of defeats on Stenbock, and obliged him to go on to the defensive.[1] Stenbock, outnumbered and harassed, took refuge overcautiously in the great fortress of Tonning, far away in the west of Schleswig, on the fringe of the North Sea. Menshikof was left to invest Tonning and strictly

[1] January 1713.

charged not to let the enemy escape. In the event of surrender Peter specifically requested him to endeavour to obtain possession of the library and any instruments which might be useful. And the Tsar departed from the field of action and went to talk to Friedrich Wilhelm at Sheinhausen near Berlin. For Frederick the First had just died, and Friedrich Wilhelm ruled over Prussia in his place.

Like Peter, Friedrich Wilhelm was an army-builder. The Peace of Utrecht having been signed, the Prussian contingent had returned with all its experience of Marlborough's wars. There seemed to be an opportunity to conclude a bargain with the new King. For Prussia might be bribed with a share in the loosely-held conquests of the north. But the conversations at Sheinhausen were more profitable to Friedrich Wilhelm than to Peter. The Prussians were inclined to take what they could get and give the least possible military aid. The Tsar promised him contingents of Russian giants for his Prussian Guard and ordered twelve hundred muskets to be brought to Berlin from his factories in Tula. Russian industrialism had developed considerably when it was possible to supply European Powers with munitions of war. But of course there was much in Prussia that the Tsar admired, and especially capable workers. The King agreed to lend some of these. Arrangements were made for General Bruce to come to Berlin to hire architects, carpenters, and metal workers. A basis of friendship and mutual friendly intercourse was established. In due course Prussia came in on the side of the allies, Russia, Saxony, and Denmark, to liquidate finally the Swedish affair, with much profit to Prussia and little expense.

Peter pursued his diplomatic mission in Hanover

and conversed in similar strain with George, afterwards George the First of England. Territorial acquisitions were dangled in front of him also, but for the time being he refused to take the bait.

Then, seeing that no direct aid could be obtained for the Schleswig-Holstein campaign, Peter decided to carry the war through Finland, employing solely Russian armies and Russian ships. "Finland is the mother of Sweden," he wrote to Apraxin, not a very apt remark, but he meant that Finland was nearest to Sweden and an important source of supplies. If he could wrest the whole of Finland from Sweden he would deprive her of a strong territorial support.

Meanwhile his mind turned again to Charlotte. The Princess had now been nine months separated from her husband. The hope of a child had been unfulfilled, and for the sake of the dynasty she and the Tsarevitch must be brought together again. Peter wanted a grandchild, and would prefer him to be begotten and born in Russia, especially if it should prove to be a son.

But the Tsar had wronged the wedded pair in the first instance by separating them. And this initial wrong he never made good. His mind was not clear. Possibly he hoped that Catherine would bear a son, and was already feeling his way toward the decision to set Alexis aside. He grudged his son his conjugal felicity. For had he so willed it would have been easy to send Alexis to Brunswick to escort Charlotte home or to live for a while with her there and bring her in the spring to Petersburg.

Charlotte could not be moved from her refuge by remonstrative letters.[1] "We do not understand how lack of money could drive you to the speedy resolution

[1] January.

to go home," wrote Peter. "We had no objection to your visiting your parents if only you had let us know in advance. . . ." In January the Tsar sent her fifteen thousand roubles in ready money and a draft on Hamburg for a substantial amount, not doubting that "your love will now direct your steps more hastily to Riga and on to Petersburg."

Peter at Hanover was little more than a day's journey from Brunswick, perhaps two days to Wolfenbüttel.[1] He had been writing in more conciliatory tone to Charlotte, and the Princess or her parents thought it wiser to have a complete personal reconciliation before departure. Charlotte wrote to Golovkin, who had accompanied the Tsar to Berlin and Hanover: "I have thought it best to turn to your Excellency with a request that you will arrange matters so that his Majesty does not pass by without calling upon us. The road from Hanover to Berlin is through Brunswick, and the Duke and my father and mother will be in despair if, being so near, we did not have the honour of seeing him here. And it would be for me the worst calamity. For I wait with impatience the happy moment when I can kiss the hand of his Majesty and hear from his lips the order to go to my beloved Prince and husband. In the event that he should not wish to come here, I hope that he will be so kind as to name a place where we could meet."

Golovkin did arrange this. They met on friendly terms at a castle near Brunswick, and Charlotte promised to set off forthwith to Russia. But Peter did not take her with him. She made the journey in her own leisurely fashion, and by the time she reached Petersburg[2] the Tsar had taken Alexis away with him into Finland.

[1] February. [2] May.

Charlotte was welcomed in the new city, and was flattered by the demonstrations in her honour. One thing was lacking, and that was the presence of her husband there. He ought to have shared in the rejoicings. She had now been away from him for more than a year.

XXXVIII

When the Tsar reached Petersburg in March he at once undertook preparations for a naval expedition against Western Finland. Provisions, cannon, ammunition, ratings, ships, all were put in readiness for the melting of the ice. His health remained good, and he was up every morning at three. At four he held his daily conference with Admiral Apraxin and others of his staff. Thence he would go to the wharves to make sure that work there was in full swing, often taking a hand himself. At nine or ten he would betake himself to the lathe and the workshop, lunching about eleven. Then he would sleep for an hour before taking a turn in the new city to see how the building and enforced settlement were progressing. In the evening he would go out to dinner and make merry with his especial cronies, frequently visiting the establishment of a Swedish cook who kept *table d'hôte* at three roubles a head. There he met foreign merchants, officers, statesmen, on a common footing without ceremony, and sat and smoked his Dutch clay pipe. But he was early to bed. His life at this time in Petersburg was much more regular than it had been at Preobrazhenskoe or Moscow.

One night in the middle of April the river sentries reported the breaking of the ice, and a salute from three cannon made it known to the Tsar and the whole population. That moment heralded the spring campaign. The fleet was ready, ninety-five galleys, sixty sailing-boats, and fifty large boats. An army of

sixteen thousand men was ready to embark. Apraxin was General and Admiral, Peter was Rear-Admiral. On the 25th April the bigger vessels were hauled down the Neva and the Baltic navy got under weigh with all its miniature transports, with the army and Peter and Alexis. On the 1st May they appeared off Helsingfors, to the great consternation of the Swedish general Armveldt, who set fire to the capital and fled. The same happened at Borgo on the coast further east, and at the port of Abo further west. The enemy offered no resistance, but fled into the interior of the country.

Meanwhile in Schleswig-Holstein Stenbock had surrendered out of Tonning on the 4th May and was held to ransom. Menshikof divided his army into two parts, and with half occupied Hamburg, and the other half he sent to Lubeck. The merchants of Hamburg paid him twenty thousand thalers to spare their Swedish trade. The merchants of Lubeck paid him one hundred thousand marks for a similar privilege.

"I thank you for the money which you have taken so smartly at Hamburg. Send it to Kurakin (in Holland) for the purchase of ships," wrote Peter to his favourite.

A mixed army under the command of Marshal Fleming captured the island of Rugen, which closes the harbour of Stralsund.

The heir of Charles the Twelfth was a consumptive boy named Charles Frederick. He was also a claimant to the Duchies of Schleswig and Holstein, which were administered by his uncle Christian August. Christian had in his employ an extremely capable and crafty Minister, Baron Goertz, who now began a successful political intrigue against the King of Denmark. The Danes did not share in the war, and were

deemed capable of signing a separate peace, for they were only concerned with their own interests. Goertz, after exposing the hand of the King of Denmark, went over to the Russian interests. First, he tried to arrange that Stenbock should surrender to the Danes alone, and that one of the terms should be the evacuation of Saxon and Russian troops from Holstein. The Danes showed themselves ready for this one-sided arrangement, which amounted to a separate peace. But the Russians would not agree, seeing that Stenbock was being starved out and must soon capitulate.

Goertz then turned to Menshikof and proposed to him the digging of a canal through Schleswig to the North Sea, the first thought of the Kiel Canal inspired by the obvious advantage to Russian shipping in being able to avoid the Cattegat. Goertz also proposed the Duchies as a Russian heritage, and offered to arrange a marriage between Charles Frederick and the Tsar's daughter Anna. Goertz was of opinion that most of the Swedish generals would surrender if offered equitable terms, and he proposed that the Baltic towns captured by the allies should be sequestered to the King of Prussia and Christian August, and occupied by an army half Prussian, half Holstinian. Menshikof agreed to this arrangement, as he felt it would successfully embroil Prussia and Sweden, and that was part of the Tsar's policy.

What was chiefly in question was the great prize of Stettin. When Friedrich Wilhelm heard it was going to be offered him for nothing he was overjoyed. But when he was asked for troops, nay, a few guns, to take it, he withdrew from the offer. The city was defended by a Swedish garrison commanded by General Meyerfeld. The Holsteiners advised him to surrender, but their influence was over-estimated. Meyerfeld said he would defend Stettin for his King.

But the Tsar was anxious that Prussia should have the city, and Menshikof, borrowing some Saxon guns, took it by assault with an army which was exclusively Russian.[1]

Stettin, with its adjacent territory, was then offered to the King of Prussia, who might have it upon payment of the cost of the siege. Friedrich Wilhelm naturally accepted, and his delight was very great. He promised thereafter to serve the Tsar's interests for ever, and he gladly entered into a pact to take over Rugen, Stralsund, and Wismar on the same terms. The Tsar preferred to see Prussians in these parts, for what Prussia held Prussia could keep, but the Danes were unreliable.

In Finland in October Apraxin and Golitsin routed the Swedes under Armveldt at Tammerfors. This was a final victory in the north. Almost the whole of Finland passed under the tutelage of Russia. Peter was well pleased. His city of Petersburg had now adequate territorial defence. He thanked and decorated his generals for their good service. It is interesting that in his complimentary letters or addresses he seldom used the words Russia or Muscovy. He did not consciously think much of the country or the nation Russia. What was done was done for him, for his progress of development and reform and for his dynasty. But at that time in Central and Eastern Europe there was little conception of countries and nations. One could not with much force appeal to national idealism. There were monarchs and families and churches and subjects, and that was all. Men ruled through loyalities and obediences, but not through national intuition.

Some apology has been made for Peter for his ill-will towards his son. It has been urged that he was think-

[1] September.

ing of Russia, and that in these years he was increasingly apprehensive that all that he had done for Russia would be ruined when Alexis came to the throne. Russia was greater than Peter, and anything, even a crime, committed for Russia's sake could be condoned.

But the apologists are partly wrong. Alexis was sacrificed, not on the altar of Russia, but on the altar of Peter. The misunderstanding had its source in the curious sexual rivalry which sometimes occurs between father and son. Peter could only tolerate his heir as a theoretical person. As a human being, as a son, as another man, he was obnoxious. It was for that reason, and not for Russia's sake, that he kept Alexis away from Charlotte. For the marriage had suppressed the theoretical heir and imposed the flesh-and-blood reality.

It was upon the return of Alexis from Finland that theory and reality were brought together for the last time. The Tsarevitch returned belatedly to his wife. Reunion with her was the great object and interest of homecoming. But Peter's mind was on something different.

" Come," said he to Alexis, " tell me how you have progressed in your study of mechanics. Well? Then go and bring your instruments, and I will myself examine you in geometry." He waited there in his little Dutch house, with his pipe in his mouth and cudgel at hand, brooding. Alexis, in hideous funk, went out. He had neglected studies which had never greatly interested him. He could not face his father with paper and instruments and show him that in practical geometry his son was an ignoramus. It is not actually chronicled, but he must have gone for a drink instead. Peter grew impatient, and sent for him to come back at once. Then, in absolute terror,

Alexis picked up a pistol and fired at his right hand. And smirking and trembling, and with his hand bandaged, he returned to the little house and confronted his father, whose rage at seeing the malingerer broke out with oaths and blows and finally seemed to spend itself in contemptuous silence.

Thus humiliated, the young man went to Charlotte, and, though he had returned from a glorious campaign, could in nowise appear a hero in her eyes. It is not surprising that he, in turn, after being beaten by his father, began to beat her. The Tsar seemed to forget his rage, and was quite willing to have his son at his drinking parties in the evening. But the son's admiration of the father had passed under a cloud. Alexis sulked and nursed a grievance against Peter. He said he would rather have fever than go to his parties, rather do hard labour in the mines than be with him. But in point of fact he chose to get drunk with his own companions and listen to the flattering gossip which came to him from Russia. All Russia was for him: his father would soon die. To-morrow he would be happy; Charlotte would be happy; everyone in Russia would be happy.

Peter did not, however, leave Alexis alone. The Tsar's ukase came to him one morning. He was commanded to Lake Ladoga to superintend the works there. Alexis was beginning to be disillusioned with Charlotte, and did not care very much. He could drink and brood on his wrongs as well at Ladoga as in Petersburg. But he began to fear what his father would do next. The idea must have already crossed his mind that Peter would ultimately seek to destroy him.

XXXIX

Possibly Peter felt that Alexis had no right to Charlotte as long as he was weak in mathematics. One of his first edicts of the new year [1] denied marriage certificates to the nobles who had not passed an examination in elementary arithmetic and geometry. Compulsory education for the sons of nobles, civil servants, and priests was inaugurated. They must attend school from the age of ten to fifteen, at which point they were forcibly gathered to the army. Before taking officer's rank they must serve as private soldiers in a Guards regiment, and such service must be real, not nominal.

The Tsar was strongly opposed to the existence of an idle gentry. Indeed, for the gentry as such he had no favour. To his mind the only rank worth consideration was military rank, the only true decoration was attainment. Thence a paradox: the greatest autocrat in Russian history was also the greatest revolutionary.

But the more severe became the ukases against the nobles the greater became the corruption in the country. Nobles had to appear in Moscow and register themselves for military service. Anyone who denounced an absentee, even his own serf, was entitled to receive his estate. Later, absentees became liable to sentence of death. But the result was not abject obedience. Some rich nobles hired poor men to personate them; others feigned religious hysteria,

[1] 20th January.

which was common enough to be not unlikely. Some used money and influence to get sinecure posts in the public service. In short, despite Peter's orders, there remained swarms of idle young men of good family who avoided the wars.

There was also some opposition to secular education. A large number of youths were banded together to avoid learning mathematics, and they sought entry to a theological seminary in Moscow. Peter ordered that they be convoyed to the Naval School in Petersburg, and there, with sentries to guard them, he set them to drive piles for the foundations of one of his streets—Moika. Among this gang of noble pile-drivers were the young brothers of Admiral Apraxin. He took offence, and as a protest stripped off his uniform and his decorations and worked with the gang till the Tsar saw him and remonstrated with him for forgetting himself.

The Tsar passed an active winter altering the laws of the country by strokes of the pen. He gave his orders, and the Senate elaborated them as Acts. In March he changed the law of inheritance, establishing entail vested in a chosen son, not primogeniture, but indivisible bequest of real estate to one person only. The object of this reform was simplification of taxation and the weakening of the patriarchal life of the landed gentry. It was enough for one member of the family to be identified with the estates, the others must seek careers and find real preferment in the army and the navy or make fortune in trade.

The cadets thus disinherited retained nevertheless their class distinction of noble origin. They and their descendants remained "nobles" even though reduced to beggary. Thus came that anomaly whereby in pre-Revolutionary Russia vast numbers of clerks,

shopkeepers, workmen, and what not were inscribed "noble" in passport description.

Peter was impatient with the slow progress in the building of Petersburg. It was still a camp. The approaches were in an indescribable condition. Wolves raided the place every night. Two sentries on duty outside the arsenal were pulled down and eaten by wolves. What he had was more a collection of houses on a frozen swamp rather than a city. Workmen died in thousands from exposure and fever; the survivors weakened and worked feebly. Their numbers had to to be fed by reinforcements like an army in the field. Church-building ceased in the land because the Tsar needed builders. It was forbidden until further notice to raise any stone edifice anywhere in Russia except in Petersburg. It is calculated that between 1712 and 1716 one hundred and fifty thousand new workmen were conscripted for labour to hasten the building of the new capital.

The Tsar's attention could be given more exclusively to home affairs, for the war with Sweden hung fire. In a sense, no problem was too great for him. He was saved by not seeing the whole of the problem. Disloyalty, at least in thought, had reached very great dimensions. Many men drew comfort from his repeated illnesses and patiently awaited his death. His residence at Petersburg saved them the ordeal of personal contact. There was more overt animosity against Menshikof than against Peter. He was the Tsar's favourite, but it was not forgotten that owing to the fact that Catherine had been his mistress he had an unusually intimate influence with her. Even the veteran hero, Sheremetief, took umbrage at Menshikof. It was intolerable that this ex-stable boy and seller of pies should be the greatest power in Russia after the Tsar.

The insurgent spirits thought always of Alexis as their leader, and doubtless hastened calamity upon an innocent head. For Alexis was on good terms with his step-mother and only anxious to live peacefully and humbly under his father. The incautious things he said when drunk were merely echoes of remarks made to him by the discontented. He repudiated his drunken conversations as soon as he was sober.

His health broke down in the spring and the doctors advised a visit to Carlsbad. That would be a relief; he would be glad to go. One of the nobles who were near to him was Alexander Kikin, who hated Menshikof, and he suggested to the Tsarevitch that once he got abroad he should stay abroad and thus avoid collisions with his father. "When you are cured, write to your father that you will stay some months longer for your health's sake. Go then to Holland, and after a seasonal cure there you could go to Italy, in that way prolonging your absence for two or three years."

Charlotte was with child, but did not restrain her husband to stay with her. He gained permission from his father to go to Carlsbad, and left on the 15th June. He had become quite cold toward his wife, and departed from her without regret. During his absence he never wrote to her. Peter took special care to provide her with every skilled attendance in child-bed, and indeed treated her very well. A daughter was born, and was named Natalia, after Peter's mother. That was on the 12th July.

XL

England, through her Minister in Holland, Lord Stafford, had made representations to all the belligerent Powers that they accept the mediation of England and Holland and make peace in the Baltic. Intervention seemed to be welcome to all except Russia. The Danes promised Stafford twenty thousand thalers for his pains. The Polish or Saxon interest suddenly found it could spare forty thousand thalers for peace negotiations, half to go personally to Lord Stafford. Kurakin at Amsterdam was sounded as to whether the Tsar would give a like amount. But instead of acceding he asked the Dutch the reason for the hurry. The Dutch said they depended on England, whom they dare not offend, and if peace was to be concluded their commercial interests in the Baltic must be protected.

The Tsar instructed Kurakin to go slowly and only to pay Lord Stafford a subsidy if he seemed favourable to Russian interests. A peace conference was begun at Brunswick, but, thanks to Russian intrigue and procrastination, could make no progress. There was, however, an unofficial armistice. Saxons and Danes ceased to fight the Swedes.

Peter alone pursued his plan of war, ceaselessly harassing what Swedes remained in Finland. It was persistently rumoured that Charles the Twelfth was at last returning, and Peter thought it wise to make the most of the time before once more he assumed command against him. He sailed with his fleet[1]

[1] 25th July.

against Stockholm, captured the Aland Islands and a Swedish frigate and ten galleys, and put the inhabitants of the Swedish capital in the utmost consternation. For he was within fifteen miles of the city. A more adventurous commander might have proceeded to attack Stockholm, if only for the moral effect. But Peter had won personally a naval victory and was enraptured with his own glory. He would not tempt Providence to take away what he had won. So he sailed back to Petersburg and enjoyed a triumph instead.[1]

This was his answer to the peace talk. He did not wish a compromised peace, but to have done with his enemy and feel secure. England and Holland were merely annoyed by the disturbance to their Baltic trade. They knew little and cared less about the destinies of the new Russia which Peter was building. The war must be stopped because it was bad for business. England under Queen Anne had no territorial interest on the Baltic shores. It was only her trade that spurred her to diplomatic action. Trade was her chief self-interest at the Brunswick Conference. But her position altered sharply a month after the Tsar's naval victory, when Queen Anne died and George of Hanover ascended the throne in her stead.[2] George the First soon proved to have decided territorial interests. He only accepted the throne of England in order to increase the power of Hanover. He soon showed that he had a strong personal interest in the Baltic settlement.

Meanwhile Charles the Twelfth, after all his adventures in exile in Turkey, was hastening home to try to save his ruined country. In November he appeared outside Stralsund, but soon found he had to deal with the resolute Prussians, a foe of a different

[1] November. [2] August.

calibre from that of the nations over whom in the past he had won such brilliant victories. Only an unbroken will not to submit or yield could allow him to think he could still recover his lost glory. Nevertheless he might have derived more hope from the lure of intrigue than from the flash of his too-much-favoured Swedish steel.

Peter had insisted three years previously, after the disaster on the Pruth, that the Turks send Charles the Twelfth back to his own country. Presumably he feared that Charles would be allowed to organise the Turkish armies and invade Russia from the south. Nothing of the kind developed. Charles, in fact, was safer squabbling with the Sultan than let loose in the troubled arena of the north. The Tsar must have realised that the return of Charles the Twelfth coupled with the inheritance of England by George of Hanover postponed the ultimate day of settlement. He was forty-two years of age—the war had been going on twelve years and seemed like to engulf the whole of his reign—a long schooling, and old age or death at the end of it! He began to pity himself for the great burden which Fate had cast upon him. After all, what he wanted to do in Russia was only half done—and who should finish the task? Not Alexis—Alexis was worthless and incapable. His bitterness against him grew with the times.

Meanwhile Alexis at Carlsbad buried himself in the study of the Scriptures and theological treatises. Presumably he took the waters, but they could hold little remedy for his neurasthenia. He corresponded with no one and went dead to the world. His wife had ceased to have much significance for him. His fear of Peter remained. "How much better it would be if I were a monk," must have been a thought that constantly occupied his mind.

His conversations, scantily reported, are in that vein. He had no courage for the conflict that was before him. When the normal period of a cure at Carlsbad had elapsed he lacked the nerve to take Kikin's advice and to go Holland and Italy, but took to drink instead. The more perplexed he became the more he sought refuge in drunkenness. It was not a very reputable heir who reappeared in Petersburg in December.

He now found a mistress, Afrosinia, a Finnish girl who had previously belonged to his tutor, and was more to be seen with her than with his wife. Unfortunately he gave her his drunken confidences, which was by no means safe keeping. Charlotte may not have been more fastidious than the ladies of her time, but it was revolting to her to receive him drunken and unclean from the coarse pleasures of the tavern.

Kikin remonstrated with him for not adhering to their plan. He ought to have thought of his own safety and of the cause of his friends—by keeping out of his father's wrath. But Alexis at this time did not seem to care very much. He began wilfully to identify himself with his father's notion of him as a worthless heir. He obtained a sort of false courage from brandy and debauch, and did not mind being carried dead-drunk out of church. For he must be considered of little danger to anyone if he were fuddled and will-less and given over to low pleasure.

Peter, for the time being, left him unmolested. He may have penetrated the causes or motives of his son's behaviour. His spies must certainly have reported his drunken remarks about what he would do when Tsar. But the theory intervened between his personal hatred of his son and positive action. Catherine had no son; Charlotte had no son. His programme

demanded a presumptive heir. Charlotte had apologised for bearing a daughter, and promised to do better next time. It was important that she and Alexis cohabit once more and try to bring the desired son into the world.

XLI

Peter spent the winter in St. Petersburg. A hundred fools and a considerable number of dwarfs, negro boys, and freaks were now established there with him, and took part in many rituals and orgies. The freezing of the Neva was now signalled by a parade of fools. As soon as the ice would bear, a clown fantastically dressed was the first to step upon it. He beat upon a big drum, calling out the inhabitants of the city to the mock ceremony. When the Tsar and a goodly company had arrived, a swarm of other fools with shovels, ropes, and hooks were let loose on the ice, following a freak standard-bearer with large canvas flag. The festivity inaugurated Russia's winter peace and the inaccessibility of the Tsar's dominions from the sea. It also heralded the re-establishment of the roads, for in the rainy autumn these were almost impassable. Carriages were lost in the mud. But with the coming of winter the gentry could arrive at their new houses more easily, on sledges. Houses also became more comfortable and secure. Many built on swamps rocked in the summer, and walls were constantly falling. But frost solidified the new city.

The pride of the Tsar was the Admiralty, now nearing completion. It had been founded in 1705. At first it was merely a large quadrangular space, one side of which gave to the water. There were ten slips for ships on the other three sides, faced with wooden workshops. From the middle of the façade

rose a wooden tower. A rampart of earth was carried around, in face of the shops. From 1711 onwards the building was fortified with stone and a parapet with six bastions arose. There was accommodation for the Lords of the Admiralty within, and also warehouses for materials and numbers of workshops. Even in the winter there was a merry clangour from the anvils, the adzes, and the wheels. The Tsar took pleasure in showing visitors the great heaps of ships' nails, the supplies of teak from the East Indies, the enormous coils of tarred rope, and cables "half the thickness of a man." Peter frequently feasted with his guests at the Admiralty, though always as if on board ship, on such maritime rations as smoked beef and small beer. And while the company ate and drank, a drum-and-fife band played in the central tower.

In 1712 the first warship was launched, the *Poltava*, with fifty guns. By 1715 upwards of thirty warships had been built, all of Kazan oak. Besides these there were hundreds of galleys. Such numbers in those times represent ceaseless constructional activity.

Peter himself dwelt either in his little Saardam model house or in the more spacious house of Catherine. Ten other houses, Saardam model, in a string, were ordered to be built for officials of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Directly opposite Peter's house was that of the Commandant of the city, Roman Bruce. Later, this house was occupied by the Synod. Catherine's house was not far distant, in what was called the Summer Garden. This was much larger than her husband's; it had seventeen windows. Feminine taste was expressed in paintings of posies on all the panes and shutters and doors. The interior walls were covered with bleached homespun linen.

An impressive post-station, with stables for many

horses, soon arose, and opposite it was an establishment called the Beast's Inn. For in April 1714 an elephant had arrived with Persian attendants, and this was built for them. The elephant was taught to kneel and bow in front of the Tsar's house. He was a present from the Shah.

Opposite Catherine's house Menshikof built his. It was more pretentious, and is said to have resembled in appearance a Lutheran church. Golovkin's house was on the Neva, built of stone from the ruins of the fortress of Nienshanz. Zotof's also was on the river. Indeed, the houses of most people important to the Tsar were accessible by boat in summer and by river-sledge in winter. Other people were veritably cast away in summer in sloughs and bogs. All Russian landowners possessing estates of over seven hundred slaves were obliged to build themselves town houses of stone and build them where they could. Hundreds of merchants from Moscow and other cities had been obliged to transfer their residence to the new city, and were very unwilling, for there was little trade. Petersburg was a Tsar's folly of enormous proportions, an artificial place, destined, it was thought, to be abandoned upon Peter's death. And it did not look at all grand. It was even ridiculous as a capital if compared with the colour and variety and Byzantine architectural magnificence of Moscow. It was in itself a denial of pomp and style, though under later Emperors it was destined to become a city of imposing grandeur and parade. But it expressed the *sans-culotte* in Peter. His contempt for show and rank did not abate in middle years.

In January 1715 took place the great burlesque marriage of the mock Patriarch, and Peter ordered the list of guests to be made out after his fancy—"Invite politely, with special style, not hastily, the

man whose family is much older than the devil! Don't forget the man who searched fifteen days for a siskin and couldn't find one, nor the man who was born in Aleppo, nor anyone who knows how to cook. . . ."

Nikitin Zotof, aged eighty-four, patriarch of mirth, had chosen to marry a young widow. The ancient burlesque was somewhat of a libertine, as appears by his habit of looking over the young Swedish girls captured in the wars. Senility and obscene ribaldry had complete expression in the Tsar's ex-tutor. For thirty years his life had been one of continual debauch, but his body evidently throve on it. The Russian cult of Bacchus had produced its Silenus.

All the follies were called out. A centenarian priest who was blind and deaf performed the ceremony. The Court fools were moved to the front of the scene and paraded in fantastic costumes hanging in cats' tails and heads of animals. The dwarfs and the drummers were to the fore; likewise the Samoyedes. Numbers of bears were brought to the wedding, bounding and bellowing among the crowds. The Tsar and Tsaritsa were dressed as Frisian peasants. There was such a masquerade that one might have thought guests had been invited from all the outlandish countries of the earth. One chronicler remarks on the great number of Asiatic costumes. At the reception the names of the guests were delivered with great absurdity by two stammerers. The male escort of the bride was composed of blind old impotent men who hung on to one another and to her. The military bands were preceded by Romodanovsky dressed as King David, but playing a hurdy-gurdy. Three generals followed him, beating drums. The wedding took place at night. Fire streamers rent the black Petersburg sky. The blind centenarian priest

The Mice bury the Dead Cat

Popular Cartoon of Peter's funeral

wore huge spectacles on which hung coloured lights. At given signals all the clowns made all their especial noises and all the guests halloed. The men in charge of the bears prodded their sides with sharp staves, and at the concerted bellowing of these animals everyone made noises and the drums beat.

That was the beginning, out of doors. The carousing, the bacchanalia, was necessarily within walls. There was much obscenity and cynical mirth. The fun was very gross. Peter and his topers found pleasure in bringing their pots to the bridal chamber and sitting all around indulging in coarse raillery while man and wife were in bed. But there were many aspects of the Zotof wedding which have seemed disgraceful, even to the most fervent admirers of Peter the Great.

Alexis in any case took no part in it, and after such an orgy and seeming mockery of the Patriarchate of the Church it is difficult to see on what moral grounds Peter could denounce his son as unfit to be his heir.

XLII

In the spring Friedrich Wilhelm of Prussia was forced to declare war on the resurgent Charles the Twelfth, who was rallying all the spent forces of his nation to the recovery of lost lands.[1] Except for the tentative and impotent friendship of France, Charles had no support. Swedish empire south of the Baltic was understood as distributable territory. Many Powers were ready to share in it. George the First of England had now acquired Bremen and Werden, and was prepared to enter the field against Charles. And an English fleet was despatched to the Baltic to watch for an opening for attack—nominally, to protect shipping. Danes, Saxons, Russians, Prussians, Hanoverians, English were now opposed to the Swedes, and a mixed army of forty thousand marched against them in July. Friedrich Wilhelm directed the campaign, and it was his Prussians more than any allies who destroyed the last forces of the hero of the north. The smaller Swedish armies about Stettin were dispersed; the main army shut up in Stralsund was defeated after a cleverly conceived assault. Charles the Twelfth fled to Norway, whence he made his way back to southern Sweden, there to organise an army of defence in case the invasion of his country should be attempted. But this was his final exit from the theatre of his wars.

The Tsar was vexed that his armies had such a small part in this important victory. But he could

[1] April.

rejoice in the success of Friedrich, for it seemed to hasten the coming of peace in the north, and that he sincerely wished. There was no further profitable fighting that could be immediately undertaken by his army or fleet, and his interest had now become pacific and defensive. All he wished was to consolidate his position on the Baltic and to raise the power and significance of his new capital.

He remained, therefore, the greater part of this year at Petersburg, planning for the future. Dynastic considerations must have occupied his mind considerably. Both Charlotte and Catherine came to be with child, and there were two chances of male issue. He intended to set aside Alexis, and began to prepare his self-justification. If by ukase he disinherited his heir, the Tsarevitch would most likely take refuge abroad, wait his death, and then return triumphantly to Russia. He must endeavour to fasten the stigma of unworthiness upon Alexis, and convince both him and his adherents of his unfitness to succeed to the throne. With that in view, his spies worked unceasingly to gather evidence against him.

A voluntary counter-espionage brought these tidings to Alexis, who lived a hysterical terrorised existence, made more horrible by his abject recourse to drink.

Charlotte and Catherine were brought to bed about the same time, and both bore sons, Charlotte on the 22nd October, Catherine a fortnight later.[1]

Alexis must have sensed his own doom in the event. His behaviour at the bedside was hysterical in the extreme. He knew that the birth of a son meant his own disgrace; he knew also, or at least it had often been said to him, that if Catherine bore a son it would go ill with him. A wild desperate love of his

[1] 3rd November.

injured wife seemed now to possess him; he clung to her as to his only hope in this world.

Charlotte was naturally excited and overjoyed at having given birth to a boy. Courtiers flocked to congratulate her. She got up from her bed to receive them, and in doing so exhausted her strength. Suddenly the radiant princess-mother was stricken with fever, and death put an unmistakeable seal upon her brow. Alexis raved at the bedside. His wretched body shook with passionate grief. Three times he was carried out unconscious. And Charlotte died. The child remained, Alexis remained, Peter remained, the child of Catherine remained.

Peter was suddenly ill again, but he delivered to his demented son his previously drafted letter of denunciation which was to prepare the way for disinheritance. On the day of his wife's funeral the letter was handed to him. That was on the 1st November, but the letter was dated 11th October, and it is surmised that the Tsar only intended to send it in the case that Charlotte's child proved to be male:—

> "Declaration to my son. It is known to all that before the beginning of the war our people were oppressed by the Swedes, who had not only stolen the so-necessary harbours of the Fatherland, but pulled a thick curtain before our eyes by cutting our communications. But afterwards, when the war began (of which business God is and was the only Director), though we suffered great loss at the hands of our constant enemy through lack of skill in war, yet when with suffering and patience we had passed through the school, to what worthy grade, by the help of the aforesaid Director, did we attain! And thus we were found deserving to see the enemy

tremble almost as much as he had caused us to tremble. All of this was accomplished by the help of the Highest, by the mutual efforts of my poor and true Russian sons. But when considering this joy given to the Fatherland by God I think of the line of succession, my joy is almost entirely eaten up, seeing thee, the heir, wholly incapable of managing State affairs (for God is not to blame, for He did not deprive thee of reason, nor did He entirely withhold from thee physical strength: for although thou art not very strong thou art not altogether weak); and moreover thou dost not wish to hear of military affairs or of how we went from darkness to light and those who did not know us in the darkness now respect us. I do not teach that one should be willing to make war without lawful reason, but that one should love war and do all that is possible to instruct and equip oneself; for that is one of the two indispensable things in Government, that disorders be quelled and the country defended. I do not wish to write many examples, but cite that of our fellow-believers, the Greeks; did they not fall because they abandoned their weapons and by their love of peace were conquered? Wishing to live in peace, they gave way always to the enemy who turned their peace into unending labour for tyrants. If you object that generals do not depend on a will above them, that certainly is no excuse, for each looks to the head in order to follow his wishes, which is obvious, for in the days of the rule of my brother did not everyone love costumes and horses, but now arms; although there are those to whom neither the one nor the other mean anything; but to whatever one shows an inclina-

tion all will show inclination and from what one turns away all will turn away. And if men turn quickly away from light amusements, how much more from the serious ones (namely, guns). Moreover, as you have no inclination, you learn nothing, and so do not know military affairs. And what if thou dost not know how to govern nor how to reward the good and punish the neglectful, not understanding the forces at work? Thou wouldst have to look into somebody's mouth like a young bird. Dost thou excuse thy liability to take part in military affairs? But that is not a reason, for it is not work but will that I wish, and that is dependent upon no disease. Ask any who remember my afore-mentioned brother, who was much more sickly than thou and could not even ride on a mettlesome horse, but was so much interested that he was a constant spectator and kept a better stable than exists now. Thou seest—that it is not great labours, but will that matters. Dost thou think that many avoid going to the wars and yet rule? Truly, although some do not go, yet they have the desire, like the deceased King of France, who was little in action himself, yet had such great desire to go and did such glorious things in war that his theatre of war was called a school of knowledge. And it was not in war alone that he did so much, but in various businesses and manufactures by which he made his country famous above others. Considering all these matters, I turn again to the first, discussing thyself, for as I am a human being and subject to death, to whom then shall I leave the plantation which with the help of the Highest I have somewhat tended? What merits the idle slave of the

Gospel who buried his talent in the earth (that is, flung away all that God had given him)? Add to that I recall the evil and obstinate morals that possess thee! How often have I scolded thee for all that, and not only scolded but flogged, and think how many years I have not spoken to thee; but nothing has succeeded, nothing has helped, all has been gratuitous, all to one side, and thou dost not wish to do anything, only to live at home and make merry, and in the latter matter repulsively. However, all is for the best! The madman rejoices in his misfortune, not grasping what may result from it (St. Paul writes the truth: how can that one rule the Church of God who is neglectful in his own house?) not only to thee, but to the whole State. Thinking upon all this with affliction, and seeing that nothing I can do inclines thee to good, I have for the common welfare determined to write thee this last testament, and wait a little in case thou shouldst now behave without hypocrisy. But if not, then be it known that I will wholly cut thee off from the succession, like a gangrenous limb, and do not say to thyself that thou art the only son I have and this is only written to frighten: Verily (God willing) I will carry it out, for for my Fatherland and my people I have not spared and do not spare my life, how therefore should I spare thee, a worthless one? Will not a good stranger be better than my own worthless?"

Alexis had no ambition, and asked nothing better than to be allowed to retire from Court intrigue and military life. But the letter filled him with consternation. Not the contents of the testament, but something worse unsaid filled him with fear.

Renunciation of the throne could only be guaranteed by his death. For obviously, when the Tsar died, an unpopular disinheritance would become void at the will of the supporters of the disinherited one. Alexis was in some ways more clever than his father, and at least as far-seeing. Peter dare not at that moment publicly disinherit Alexis. On the day after the despatch of the letter Catherine was delivered of a son. But Catherine and her offspring had no standing in the eyes of most Russians. Alexis, for all his faults, was more of a Russian than his father and vastly more popular. Moreover, he had committed no crime, and though he had good reason to be disloyal, seeing the cruel fate of his mother, he had proved to be one of the meekest and most submissive subjects of the Tsar.

Alexis therefore, instead of making a long repentance, took his father at his word, told him he was right, and declared his readiness to be disinherited.

Three days after the receipt of Peter's letter he replied to him:—

> "Most gracious sovereign father! On the 27th of October, 1715, day of the funeral of my wife, I read what was sent me from thee, and I have no more to say except that if it be thy will to deprive me of the succession to the Russian Crown, then be it according to thy will. Concerning which, sir, I most humbly pray you: that since I am useless and worthless for this business and also quite lacking in memory (without which it is not possible to do anything), and since as a result of various illnesses all my intellectual and physical forces have been weakened and I have become worthless for the government of such a great people which needs a man not so

rotten as I, for the sake of that, for the succession (God give you many years of health) of Russia after you (though I had no brother, now, thank God, I have a brother whom God grant health). I do not pretend, and in the future will not pretend, as God is my witness, and for clear evidence I write it with my own hand. I entrust my children to your will and ask for myself subsistence till death. Placing all these matters at the disposal of your judgment and gracious will, your most submissive slave and son, Alexis."

Peter was very ill. The attack, heralded by violent facial contortions and paroxysms which almost amounted to fits, made him unapproachable. His joy in the birth of heirs presumptive was swallowed up in his destructive rage against Alexis. The decision to alienate him had not been easily taken. It is considered that the letter, though dated 11th October, was not written till after the birth of Charlotte's son. Fear and spiritual impotence wrought havoc with the Tsar's nerves. Hence his great prostration and the return of his recurrent malady. The reply of Alexis did not soothe him, but possibly made his condition worse. Suddenly it seemed to the doctors and those nearest to the sovereign that the end was at hand. Peter was on his death-bed; he received the Sacraments.

What Alexis thought of his father's illness is not recorded, but he did not hate his father, nor was he so cowardly as to wish him to die. His chief counsellor, Kikin, warned him to be on his guard. "Thy father is not seriously ill; he deliberately makes his last confession and takes the Sacrament to make it appear to people that he is extremely ill, but it is all a pretence."

It was a habit of Peter to sham being tipsy in order to hear what was said indiscreetly by those near him. So it was not inconceivable that, being very ill, he pretended to be even on the point of death, that he might see how the Tsarevitch and those about him would behave. When on Christmas Day he came out of his house and went to church, people found him to be in better shape than reports of his condition had led them to expect. He was pale and worn, that was all. Nevertheless, he certainly had been very ill, and it must be remembered that once his treatment had proved effective and the fever had left him, his power of recuperation was great.

Three weeks later he replied to his son [1]:—

> "One last reminder. Owing to my ill health I have lacked the power till this moment. I now answer that I have read thy letter to my first letter; in it thou art only concerned with the succession and thou placest at the disposal of my will what always was there without thy words. But why dost thou not make express answer to my letter, for I wrote much more about deficiency of will and lack of interest in affairs than about the physical weakness about which alone thou repliest? And although it was severely written thou takest no notice of the fact that for several years I have been displeased with thee. For that reason I consider that thou dost not pay a very great deal of attention to thy father's warning, which prompts me to write these further words; for now that thou fearest nothing how wilt thou keep a covenant with me? As for the oath thou takest, I cannot, in my aforementioned severity of mood, believe it. As David said: all men are

[1] 19th January.

liars. Although thou mightest sincerely wish to keep that oath, thou mightest well be inclined and forced to break it by the long-beards who, thanks to thy parasitism, are encouraged to no advantage and to whom thou art mightily sympathetic. I ask again, in what way does thy birth honour thy father? Dost thou, having quite grown up, help me in my so insupportable griefs and labours? Not a whit. Everyone knows thou rather hatest my doings on behalf of my people accomplished not sparing my own health and of which absolutely thou wilt be the destroyer. For that reason it is impossible for thee to remain as thou wishest, neither meat nor fish; either change thy habits and become sincerely worthy of the inheritance, or be a monk: for without this being settled my spirit cannot be at rest, especially just now that my health is so poor. To this, upon receipt, reply without delay, either by letter or to me personally, stating thy resolve. But if thou dost not, then I shall deal with thee as with an evil-doer. Peter."

To this the Tsarevitch replied very briefly that he would be a monk. As was said at the time by his friends Kikin and Viasemsky, who remarked, "The cowl is not nailed to the head; it can be taken off again. . . . When there is no other way, why not go to a monastery; send a priest to your father to tell him?"

Alexis sent a priest, and himself wrote to his father [1]:—

"Most gracious sovereign father! I received your letter, but cannot answer it at greater length

[1] 20th January.

on account of my illness. I desire monastic rank and for that ask your gracious permission. Your slave and unworthy son Alexis."

This was an obvious decision for the Tsarevitch, and needed not the prompting of his friends. He had long thought of the peace of a monastic life. Apart from faction and intrigue he would have been quite ready to become a monk and remain one even after Peter's death. The only real obstruction to his choice at this time was his passion for Afrosinia, to whom he seemed to be attached with a warmth of passion which his late wife had never known. But he was ready to sacrifice even Afrosinia for the sake of peace, and at once began to make provision for her.

Peter was not, however, contented with his son's decision, and therefore did not accept it, but bade him still consider the matter. Alexis moreover was ill and had taken to his bed. The Tsar himself could not make up his mind as to what was best to be done. It was inexpedient to remove Alexis from the succession by manifesto, or to appear to have forced him to take refuge within the Church. In a state of indecision he departed from Russia for Denmark. Alexis and his adherents were all greatly relieved. Time seemed to be on their side, for Peter might die or become embroiled in some new European quarrel which would divert his attention from this unhappy matter.

Peter at Fifty

XLIII

PETER'S presence was required in Denmark, because he alone could safeguard Russian interests in the final reckoning with Sweden. His Ministers and Generals lacked the personal force for this end. But the war ought to have ended. Russia had obtained all the conquests she could reasonably hope to hold. The enemy was beaten. What Peter expected to gain by an invasion of south-western Sweden is not obvious. Possibly a continuance of active warfare seemed the only alternative to a quarrel over the spoils.

As a dynastic safeguard the Tsar married his niece Catherine, one of Ivan's children, to Karl Leopold, Duke of Mecklenburg. The marriage contract was signed at Petersburg on the 22nd January. Substantial financial provision was made, and Peter obliged himself to use all his power to obtain for the Duke the port of Wismar and the adjacent territory, and also Warnemunde. In case of failure a lump sum of two hundred thousand roubles would be paid to him. But George the First of England proved irreconcilably hostile to this territorial arrangement. England urged that the Duke of Mecklenburg's divorce from his first wife was not considered valid, and that the children of the new marriage were certain to be regarded as illegitimate. A treaty between England and Russia against Sweden was offered as an alternative. Such a counter-proposal would necessarily have proved most attractive to the Tsar, who

was in great need of a strong ally, but the details came too late and the preliminary matter was too vague to cause Peter to hesitate. He set off from Petersburg in February and took the bride with him to the nuptial rendezvous at Dantzig. The marriage took place upon the 8th April.

To that the Danes replied by neglecting their preparations for an invasion of Sweden, and planned a descent upon Wismar instead. Wismar was a greatly-coveted port. It had been promised both to Prussia and Mecklenburg. George of England thought it ought to go to the Saxons, and the Danes considered it as theirs in any equitable settlement. Peter, in order to avoid the payment of the two hundred thousand roubles to the Duke of Mecklenburg, was most anxious to hand it over to the bridegroom. The fall of the city was inevitable. The only question was into whose hands the surrender would be made. Repnin was sent thither with a small Russian army.[1] He found the city already occupied by Danes, Hanoverians, and Prussians, and the Commandant, Devitz, was in no wise inclined to admit a contingent of Russians. All representations failed: Repnin was obliged to turn about and march back, but the allies almost came to blows over it.

Peter thought it unwise to quarrel with the Danes over Wismar. He believed that the invasion and conquest of southern Sweden would put a different complexion upon affairs, and he resolved to await the outcome of the summer campaign. On the 1st May he quitted Dantzig to talk over affairs with Friedrich Wilhelm at Stettin, and again he impressed the King of Prussia very favourably. The Prussians were with him. Peter then set off in the direction of Hamburg, and met the King of Denmark at Altona. Of him

[1] 4th April.

the Tsar was not so sure. The King was suspicious of the ultimate intentions of the Russians. But a plan of campaign was agreed on. The Russians were to invade the mainland of Sweden at two points, east and south, under the cover of the British fleet. Unfortunately Admiral Norris did not seem empowered to give much aid to this enterprise, and the Tsar therefore instructed Kurakin to approach the English Court with a view to obtaining more hearty co-operation. Meanwhile, as he felt his illness returning, he went to Pirmont to take the waters.

The Russian army was mobilised at Rostock above Warnemunde, and a great number of Russian ships were anchored in the harbour. Upon completing his cure the Tsar arrived in this place and superintended personally the organisation of supplies, equipment, and transport.[1] But the Danes found one reason after another for delaying action. Peter sailed with a part of his fleet to Copenhagen, but was unable to hasten matters even by his personal presence.[2] The formalities of the Court annoyed him. He suffered considerable *ennui* through inaction and loneliness, and sent for Catherine, whom he had left at Petersburg.

Copenhagen was given over to fruitless parleys—"chatterings." The Tsar set off himself to Stralsund to find out who was delaying the transports which should have gone to Rostock to bring his army.[3] On his way back to Copenhagen he decided to find out for himself what was the strength of the Swedish position. His ships kept to the northward and followed the coastline. He soon discovered that the enemy had not been idle, and had profited by the delay to organise his defences. He estimated that there was a Swedish army of at least twenty thousand men. The coastal batteries opened fire on the

[1] 15th June. [2] July. [3] 15th July.

Russian fleet, doing some damage. The Tsar's ship itself was struck by a cannon-ball and almost wrecked.

Upon his return to Copenhagen Peter must have realised that there was very little hope of success in this project of invasion. He was not sure that he was strong enough. His mind turned to other matters; he began to review once more the question of Alexis. The Tsarevitch was a widower; could not some use be made of him on the European chess-board? The idea of removing him from the succession had perhaps weakened a little. He could be of little use as a monk; he could be used, as he had used his niece Catherine, to safeguard Russian territorial interest in the north. But it is possible he merely designed to use him as a soldier again, or as an organiser of supplies.

On the 26th August he wrote to the Tsarevitch again:—

> My son! I have received your two letters in which you write only of your health. So I write to remind you. Although, when I said good-bye to thee and asked concerning thy resolve in the matter known to us, and thou always replied that thou wast too weak to be heir and proposed to go to a monastery, did I not tell thee to think about it seriously and write me later what thy resolution was, and I have waited seven months, and all the while thou writest nothing about it? Now since thou hast had time for reflection, upon receipt of this letter decide quickly to do one thing or the other. If the former, then with no more than a week's delay repair hither, for thou still hast time to get here for action. If the latter, then write where and what day (that

my conscience may be at rest regarding what I may expect of thee). What I must know finally is, one, that thou hast set out from Petersburg, or, alternatively, that thou hast done the other thing. This we again emphasise in order that this may be settled at last, for I see that thou only wastest thy time in accustomed unfruitfulness.

It would probably have been wiser for Alexis to have gone to his father at Copenhagen than to resolve on flight. Peter was an ill man to thwart or deceive. But the Tsarevitch was guided again by Kikin and his other adherents. They emphasised the physical danger in which Alexis stood from the Tsar's wrath. Sooner or later he would be destroyed if he remained within range of Peter's arm. A great opportunity for escape had arrived. They counselled him to agree to his father's first demand and set out, as it were, for Denmark, and then make his way to some country that could afford safe refuge.

Alexis left Moscow at once and called upon Menshikof in Petersburg, declaring his readiness to go at once to Denmark. He said he was taking Afrosinia with him as far as Riga, but would then send her back to Petersburg. As he was very short of money he borrowed a substantial sum from the town treasury at Riga. He went as far as Libau, and then assumed disguise. His mistress accompanied him and probably was disguised also—as a page. And then for a space of time they completely disappeared. Peter and Catherine awaited Alexis in vain, but the Tsar guessed what had happened, and very quickly gave orders for search and instructions to his ambassadors at foreign Courts.

XLIV

The situation in Denmark did not improve. Repnin's army was not yet transported from Rostock. The Tsar held a general "concilium" [1] to place before his generals and admirals the question of the advisability of invading Sweden in the autumn. The concilium decided that the invasion be postponed to next year. The decision alarmed the dilatory Danes, who at last provided ships for Repnin, though not sufficient for his whole army. Three regiments of dragoons were left stranded. But the rest of the army was landed in Denmark. Repnin and his staff confirmed the decision not to proceed to active warfare, and the Danes at once concluded that Peter's object was not the conquest of Sweden, but of Denmark. Panic ensued. In one night Copenhagen became all barricades and trenches and the Danish infantry was on guard at every place of strength. George the First called upon Admiral Norris to intercept Russian shipping, but the Admiral refused to act upon the order, as it came from him as Elector of Hanover and not from London. A further order came from George to Norris—he was to seize all Russian ships and the person of the Tsar himself, and not to let Peter go until all Denmark and Germany had been cleared of Russian troops. But the British Government would not ratify the royal wrath. Russia's power of retaliation upon British merchants in Russia was too great. The Prince of Wales, who

[1] 1st September.

had a cooler head, remonstrated with his father: the better plan would be to provoke the King of Denmark first to declare war on Russia and help him secretly. But the preparations for war proved quite superfluous. Peter's troops did not interfere with the Danes. Early in October they were re-embarked for Mecklenburg, and part of the army was even sent as far as the frontier of Poland into winter quarters. On the 16th of October the Tsar himself sailed away with Catherine.

In all these difficulties Friedrich Wilhelm proved a staunch friend of the Tsar. He accepted as quite reasonable the decision not to invade southern Sweden, and refused to believe that Peter had designs on Denmark. The insurgent nobility of Mecklenburg, despising their sovereign and his relationship to Peter, sought help at the Prussian Court, but Friedrich Wilhelm refused to associate himself with their cause and instead notified the Russian Chancellor Golovkin that Prussia, as ever, would do nothing against the Tsar. English diplomacy also received a rebuff at Berlin when it was sought to persuade the King that Peter intended to keep for himself Stralsund and Stettin. Nor had the Hanoverians more success in insinuating that the Tsar wished to possess himself of Hamburg, Lubeck, and Wismar. The two monarchs had an understanding of one another which could not be broken.

If Peter left Copenhagen without parade of festive farewell, his warm welcome from Friedrich at Havelsburg made up for it.[1] The King of Prussia, mean as he was, came with gifts. He brought him a rich cabinet of amber, and he presented him with a magnificent yacht which had been built in Holland by order of his late father. At the time it was the

[1] 20th October.

finest yacht ever launched in Holland. In return the Tsar gave him a detachment of giants for his Prussian Guard. He promised a hundred, and a hundred and fifty came, most of them about as tall as the Tsar himself.

A definite alliance between Russia and Prussia was agreed on by the two sovereigns at Havelsburg. They had made clear to one another which territories they wanted and which they would guarantee to one another in the partition of lost Swedish possessions. If any Power attacked Russia with a view to wresting her conquest, Friedrich Wilhelm agreed to aid Russia with troops or to make a diversion by invading the country of the attacking party. The only hope of Sweden now lay in the divisions of her enemies. Hence the great value to Russia of the Treaty of Havelsburg. Hanover and Denmark, abetted by England, were not strong enough to thwart Russian policy backed by Prussia.

The Tsar set off from Havelsburg in good spirits. The truancy of Alexis did not seem to trouble his mind greatly. Although his son practised a mean deception on him, and had acted most rashly, it is possible that if he had completely disappeared his action would have been justified. If he could have sustained his adventurous rôle and kept out of his father's sight till the end it would have been well for both. For Peter's anxiety concerning his successor need not have been centred upon Alexis. He had no potential successor of his own spirit. His edifice must in any case rock when he died.

Peter went to Hamburg, Amsterdam, and Paris, not certainly to seek his son or to do anything serious, but rather for a holiday. He loved travelling; was, as ever, deeply interested in the life of the West, and the time had come when his army and navy did not

need his presence. As regards the entanglements of diplomacy, he had done his part at Havelsburg in straightening out his relationship with the power of Prussia.

Therefore one can pass over his characteristic behaviour in Holland and Paris. There was little in it that further exemplifies the man. He left Catherine behind to follow him at a more leisurely pace, for she was once more with child. She was to come to him at Amsterdam, which he reached on 6th December. Catherine and her ladies did not receive very respectful treatment passing through the territory of Hanover. At least she complained to Peter, and ascribed her misfortune in child-bed to neglect. Her baby Paul was born at Wesel, but died in a few days, and the mother herself was left in a dangerous condition. Peter was afraid that the same fate as had overtaken Charlotte might overtake Catherine. He wanted at once to go to his wife, but his nervous excitement had its usual consequence in a return of his illness and a fever which lasted several weeks. Catherine recovered before he did, and was at his bedside while he still lay prostrate.

When Peter recovered news was brought to him that England was likely to declare war on Sweden. Charles the Twelfth was reported to be furnishing an army for the Young Pretender. But this was a newspaper canard. The Tsar thought it might be true, and was greatly pleased. But his joy was short-lived. The first revelation was followed by a second. Russia also had been favouring the cause of the Pretender. George the First was decidedly not friendly towards Russia, received Russian ambassadors with coldness, and when next month he paid a visit to Holland refused to meet the Tsar personally or to have anything to do with his representatives.

To all diplomatic inquiries at the Ministries of Hanover and England one answer was given: "Evacuate Mecklenburg; then perhaps we can find a basis for discussion." Peter was convinced by this. On the 24th March he departed from Holland for Paris, there to play with the diplomatists again, to see the boy-King Louis the Fifteenth and the Regent, the Duke of Orleans. Before leaving Amsterdam he sent a Captain of the Guard and three other officers to kidnap Alexis, who had been located in Vienna. But they were not successful in their mission.

Had Alexis not run away, or had he been captured in Vienna, he might have been married to the daughter of the Duke of Orleans. The project was favourably entertained by the Tsar, who was capable of forgetting his aversion from his son if any advantage to his plans could thereby be attained. It is possible that by keeping near to his barbarous father the Tsarevitch might have escaped his terrible end. Peter, with his chess-player's mind, was scheming for new European combinations, and was well aware of the possibilities latent in advanced pawns supported by cannons and knights. Thus, not only was he willing to avoid the sacrifice of Alexis, but he dreamed of marrying his little daughter Catherine to the boy-King Louis. It was with this thought that he dandled Louis the Fifteenth on his knees and wrote afterwards to the Tsaritsa, "The local kinglet visited me last Monday; he is only a finger or so taller than our dwarf Luke, quite tolerable in looks, and sufficiently intelligent, considering that he is only seven years old."

But the interests of France and Russia were not very close. France was the main European support of the Turks, of whom the Russians were the traditional enemies. France was also at enmity with the house

of Hapsburg, which also was hostile to Turkey. France also had already sentimental bonds with the Polish nationalists whom Peter had always considered negligible. France also had supported Charles the Twelfth. There was not much ground for a mutual understanding, nevertheless a tentative agreement was made, uniting, or seeming to unite, the interests of France, Prussia, and Russia in the north.

And the Tsar was well received. There was an alliance of wine, if not of hearts. Peter's portrait was painted while he sat at dinner at the Palais de Petitbourg with the Duc d'Antin, and suddenly, with great *éclat*, it was hung facing him, on the wall of the dining-hall. When he went to the medal foundry at the Louvre, suddenly his own medal jumped off the press and fell at his feet. Picking it up, he saw his own portrait on it, and the legend "Vires acquirit eundo," words much praised by Voltaire for their aptness. The phrase is from Virgil and refers to rumour—it gains strength as it goes.

At the grave of Richelieu Peter embraced the statue and exclaimed, "I would give one-half of my lands to learn of thee how to govern the other half."

He visited Mme. de Maintenon, who, in a sense, was almost the acknowledged widow of Louis the Fourteenth, though his mistress. Peter felt that perhaps her position had been kindred to that of Catherine with him, but, as the French historian remarks, there was a great difference, Catherine was a romantic woman, a heroine, and Mme. de Maintenon was merely a *femme aimable*.

The Sorbonne asked him to unite the Churches of the East and West, and Peter, who was offending no one, politely promised to consider the matter.

For the rest, his visit was characteristic. He went about dressed as no monarch had ever appeared in

Paris—in old working clothes.[1] He went to all the shops and factories, workshops, armouries, museums, studying novelties, acquiring instruments and books. There was much in Paris that could not be found elsewhere in Europe, and he was well pleased.

At length, on the 9th June, he departed for Spa, to take the waters, and after a cure which lasted a whole month, he returned to Amsterdam, there to sign the tentative treaty with France and Prussia, there to discuss peace with Poniatovsky, a partisan of Charles the Twelfth, and through Kurakin convince Goertz that the game was up.

Sweden must capitulate on Peter's terms, otherwise the invasion planned previously would take place in the autumn or following spring. To make sure of a sound peace, the Tsar believed in being constantly a menace in war. For this reason, despite all provocation, he could not lend himself to a quarrel with his allies. From Amsterdam he betook himself once more to Copenhagen, there to soothe the irritated and suspicious Danes and prepare to resume the campaign, using their shores as a base.

England and Hanover all the while pursued a hostile policy. George the First asked Prussia for the loan of troops to drive the Russians out of Mecklenburg, but Prussia refused. Dolgoruky informed Peter that the Hanoverian Minister, Bolmar, had made a similar request to Denmark, but the King replied that he could not act against one who continued to be his ally. Peter wished to remove all his troops from Mecklenburg and land them in Sweden, which could not be effected all at once and not until the following spring. It meant the presence of a large army in Denmark, and the King of Denmark preferred to know that army was in

[1] April and May.

Mecklenburg and not within striking distance of his capital.

Curiously, despite the enmity of George toward Peter, the Tsar continued to hope for naval co-operation by England. England still remained in the war, an ally of a kind, and promised to send twenty battleships if the Russians evacuated Mecklenburg.

The King of Denmark wished to limit the Tsar's expeditionary force to twenty battalions; the remainder, much the larger part of the army, to remain behind in Mecklenburg. To this it was naturally objected that with so small a force one could not expect success in an invasion of the homeland of the enemy.

England and Hanover worked hard to alienate Denmark from Russia, and so crush Russia out from the fruits of victory. Their representatives and those of Saxony suggested secretly to Peter that he remove for the winter into Danish territory. Then information was given in Copenhagen that that was the Tsar's intention. There was instant consternation, and the Tsar, indignant at the chicanery practised upon him and his ally, wrote to the King of Denmark:—

> "Such proposals certainly were made, but I at once understood that the only object in making them was to create disagreement between your Majesty and myself, and afford a motive for a break, and for that reason I rejected them, having the unfaltering intention of preserving the friendship and alliance with your Majesty, and of avoiding all incidents which might by any chance lead to rupture. My conduct in relation to you is such that I am quite at a loss to understand how you could imagine that I

should wish, against your will and without preliminary agreement, to move my troops into your possessions for winter quarters, thus showing myself eager to quarrel with the ally upon whom I most rely, the ally whose interest is so closely bound with my own. Recall that when my Guard regiments and others were in Zetland in the autumn, and were in sore need of fuel, I would not permit them against your will to hew down one tree or to take wood anywhere, and afterwards when, because of contrary winds, our troops were obliged to remain long on the sea, I would not allow them against your wish to land on your shores. I have done everything to refute the lying and malicious suggestions of our foes. With great sorrow I see by your Majesty's note that you have little faith in me. . . . Now I shall await the swift, final, and categorical decision of your Majesty enabling me to be prepared betimes. And if you do not now come into agreement with me, then not only before you, but before God and all honourable people shall I be justified. For no other reason than to be near in case of need, to help you, have I kept my army all this time in Mecklenburg, incurring the indignation of the whole German Empire and also the hatred and unworthy reproach of my allies. . . ."

This letter is not in the Tsar's characteristic language, but the spirit of it is his. Dolgoruky presented it at Copenhagen, but the only answer he received to the demand for a decision was that Denmark had already decided. Twenty battalions and no more was her answer. The summer and the autumn of 1717 were spent in altercations on these themes;

the exit from Mecklenburg and the question of twenty battalions or the whole army. Peter's best hope of settlement and agreement still seemed to lie in Prussian co-operation, and in September he visited Berlin, designing after that to return home at last to Petersburg.

His Ministers arrived ahead of him, and at once began the task of drafting the terms of the peace to which the Powers would agree. Prussian and Russian subordinates of strong and intemperate masters dare not compromise any difficulties, and therefore their labours were barren, but when the Tsar arrived and embraced "brother Friedrich" the two sovereigns were at one. The Prussian project of giving back Livonia to Sweden was abandoned. The Treaty of Havelsburg was renewed. Provision was made for a treaty between Friedrich Wilhelm and the unpopular Duke of Mecklenburg, who, with his Russian consort, arrived in Berlin the day after the Tsar. Wilhelm discussed the affairs of Mecklenburg with him, he on the whole loth to ally himself with a sovereign whose nobility were insurgent. There would be no separate peace, and each monarch would keep the other informed of every diplomatic move. Peter guaranteed Stettin to Prussia.

Wilhelmina, aged nine, the sister of Frederick (the Great), watched what happened at her father's Court, and described it in a diary, possibly with the help of some governess or relative. As Carlyle remarks, eyes are better than no eyes, even the eyes of a child, and Wilhelmina's pages contain a lively description of Peter and Catherine.

> "The Tsar at once recognised me, having seen me before, five years ago. He caught me

in his arms and fell to kissing me, like to flay the skin off my face. I boxed his ears, sprawled and struggled with all my strength; saying I would not allow such familiarities and that he was dishonouring me. He laughed greatly at this idea; made peace, and talked a long time with me. I had got my lesson; I spoke of his fleet and his conquests—which charmed him so much that he said more than once to the Tsaritsa—if he could have a child like me he would willingly give one of his provinces in exchange. The Tsaritsa also caressed me a good deal. The Queen and she placed themselves under the dais, each in an armchair. I was at the Queen's side, and the Princesses of the Blood were opposite to her.

The Tsaritsa was a little stumpy body, very brown, and had neither air nor grace; you only needed to look at her to guess her low extraction. With her huddle of clothes she looked for all the world like a German play-actress; her dress you would have said had been bought at a second-hand shop; all was out of fashion, all was loaded with silver and greasy dirt. The front of her bodice she had ornamented in a very singular pattern: a double eagle in embroidery, and the plumes of it set with very poor little diamonds, of the smallest possible cost and very ill mounted. All along the facing of her gown were Orders and little things of metal; a dozen Orders and as many portraits of Saints, of relics and the like, so that when she walked it was with a jingling, as if you heard a mule with bells to its harness.

The Tsar, on the other hand, was very tall and might be called handsome; his countenance was

beautiful, but had something of the savage in it which put you in fear. His dress was of sailor fashion, coat altogether plain.

The Tsaritsa, who spoke German very ill herself, and did not understand well what the Queen said, beckoned to her fool to come near.

At table the Tsar placed himself near the Queen. . . . There took him very often a sort of convulsion like tic or St. Vitus, which it was beyond his power to control. That happened at table now. He got into contortions, gesticulations; and as the knife which was in his hand and went dancing about within arm-length of the Queen, it frightened her, and she motioned several times to me. The Tsar begged her not to mind, for he would do her no ill; at the same time he grasped her by the hand, which he did with such violence that the Queen was forced to shriek out. This set him heartily laughing; saying she had not bones of so hard a texture as Catherine's. . . ."

There are many more lively details in Wilhelmina's diary. She wrote how Peter would not stay to the ball, but walked home to the Queen's bower at Monbijou, which he had elected to occupy. She told the story of the indecent statue which Peter fancied and obtained in gift from Friedrich Wilhelm, and how he made Catherine kiss it. There was a relish for scandal in Germany at that time, and Wilhelmina savoured it. She imagined that every baby of the many ladies in waiting was offspring of Peter. She alleged there were four hundred of these ladies—who were mostly laundresses, and that when asked whose children they held in their arms they replied, "*Le Tsar m'a fait l'honneur de me faire cet*

enfant," which seems a little absurd. Pollnitz in his memoirs tells another anecdote to which more credence seems to be given than is due, and that is, that when the Duchess of Mecklenburg, the Tsar's niece, arrived, the Tsar snatched her into an inner room and, the door being left open, the company saw him possess her.[1] The complaisance of the Duke of Mecklenburg under the circumstances appears too remarkable.

Peter only stayed four days in Berlin. He had done what he wanted to do there, and so, in company with the Mecklenburgs, he set off for their country on the 23rd September, 1717. The evacuation of his army from Mecklenburg into Livonia had been begun. He had no intention of resuming war against Sweden at this late date. He now believed that peace was obtainable, and resolved to return to Petersburg, there to deal once more with the question of Alexis and the succession.

[1] "Too Samoyedic for human speech," says Carlyle, "and would exceed belief, were not the testimony so strong."

XLV

The Tsarevitch Alexis was very much in love with Afrosinia, whom he now wished to marry. She accompanied him in his flight, and during the year 1717 became with child by him. This growing bond was the chief obstacle to his choice of monkhood. When he thought to fulfil his own decision and enter a monastery, the prospect of losing Afrosinia was a deterrent. To this passion therefore his flight was in part due. His dependence upon her also ultimately facilitated his recapture by the Tsar and afforded a means for his destruction.

We have to deal with a man of weak will and little spirit, one incapable of accomplishing the somewhat easy task of losing himself in Europe. Instead of hiding himself somewhere in Germany or Austria under an assumed name and earning his living, or vagabondising, as Goldsmith did some years later, he appeared at the Court of Vienna as the Russian heir and sought the protection of the Emperor of Austria. His disguise had lasted little more than a month.

In a state of great nervous excitement he visited the Vice-Chancellor of the Empire one evening in November, 1716, and said to him: "I have come hither to ask my brother-in-law, the Emperor, to save my life. They wish to ruin me, to take away the crown from me and from my poor children. The Emperor must save my life and secure the succession to myself and to my children. My father

wishes to deny me my life and the throne, but I am not guilty of anything, have done nothing to provoke my father's anger and have done him no wrong. If I am a weak man it is due to Menshikof, who brought me up in that way, upsetting my health by drunkenness. Now my father says I am of no use for war, nor for governance, but I have mind enough to govern. The Lord God alone grants inheritance, and they wish to shut me up in a monastery to hide me so as to kill me and deprive me of the succession. But I do not wish to go into a monastery. The Emperor must save my life. Take me to the Emperor!" At this point apparently he was overcome by his emotion, and the Vice-Chancellor gave him wine. Then he went on again in the same strain: "I never did anything against my father, always was obedient, interfered in nothing. I lost heart through being watched and because they wished me to drink myself to death. My father was kind to me until my wife began to have children, when all went ill. Things went especially wrong when the Tsaritsa bore a son. She and Prince Menshikof constantly set my father against me. Both are evil people, godless, conscienceless. I am in no way guilty of wrong to my father. I love and honour him according to the commandments, but I do not wish to take the vows and deprive my poor children of their rights. The Tsaritsa and Menshikof wish to kill me or hide me away in a monastery. I have never wished to be a soldier, but some years ago my father gave me administrative work to do and all went well; my father was pleased. But when my children were born, my wife died, and the Tsaritsa bore a son, they wished to torture me to death or drive me to death by drink. I remained calmly at home, but a year ago I was obliged by my father to

choose between renunciation of the throne or a monastic life. Following upon that, a courier arrived from my father ordering me either to come to him or at once to take the monastic vows. To do the former meant to ruin myself drinking and fretting, to do the latter meant to ruin myself body and soul. After that I was told to beware of my father's anger. I heard that the partisans of Menshikof and the Tsaritsa, apprehensive of my father's health, wished to poison me. That is why I pretended to journey to my father, and good friends advised me to go to the Emperor, who is my brother-in-law and a great, magnanimous sovereign whom my father esteems. The Emperor will afford me shelter. I could not go to the Swedes or the French, who are my father's enemies, and that would enrage him more. It is said I treated my wife, the sister of the Empress, badly, but God knows it was not I who ill-treated her, but my father and the Tsaritsa, who wished to make her serve them like an ordinary parlour-maid, and she grieved greatly, for her education unfitted her for that. For that reason they cut short our allowance and they treated her very badly when she became a mother. I want to go to the Emperor; the Emperor will not abandon me and my children, will not betray me to my father, who is surrounded by evil people. My father is himself very cruel, sets no value on human life, thinks that, like God, he has power of life and death. He has already shed much innocent blood, often punishes unfortunate prisoners with his own hands, he is extraordinarily bad-tempered and revengeful, spares no one, and if the Emperor should hand me over to him it will result in his executing me himself. Even if my father spared me, my stepmother and Menshikof would not rest till I was tortured to death or poisoned."

All this was communicated to the Emperor, who, though sympathetic, considered it expedient not to receive him and not to take official cognisance of his presence in his territories. The Tsarevitch must for the time being retain his incognito. The name under which he arrived was Kokhansky; Kokhansky for the time being he must remain. But for greater safety he had better leave Vienna and hide himself in a village near the city. Meanwhile the Emperor promised to make inquiries and obtain confirmation of the story of Alexis before he proceeded further in the matter. Several capable Austrians were sent to cross-examine him, and it was easy to conclude that he stood genuinely in need of protection and was an object of pity. For he was very garrulous, even childishly so, and almost completely without guile. A feature that was remarkable was his admiration of his father, which remained despite his fear and a frustrated desire for family peace and love, and loyalty within the limits of his capability. He did not now, and never had wished to undertake anything against his father—only he had a mortal fear of the consequences of returning to him after flight.

It was decided to place him in honourable confinement in the castle of Erenburg in the Tyrol, there to remain until reconciliation between father and son was accomplished. This gave pleasure to Alexis, who asked only for the presence of a father confessor of the Orthodox Church for his spiritual comfort. That, however, was denied. Had he asked for a Catholic it would have made a better impression.

The Tsar's agents traced Alexis to Vienna,[1] and then lost sight of him. They were, however, convinced that he was within the Empire, and in that belief the Tsar sent the Guard captain Rumiantsef

[1] March.

and three other officers to capture him and convey him to Mecklenburg. Veselovsky, the Russian Minister at Vienna, traced Alexis to the castle of Erenburg and was able to inform Rumiantsef of that fact when he arrived. The captain thereupon set off for the castle. He ascertained that the Tsarevitch was there, but he could not gain admittance and saw no possibility of carrying him away.

Official representations were then made to the Emperor, who at first disclaimed all knowledge of the matter, and then promised to write personally to the Tsar about it. This promise he showed himself in no hurry to fulfil. In Vienna the Tsar's somewhat absurd visit in 1698 was still remembered. All sorts of legends, most of them unworthy, had gathered about his name. Even despite his success over Charles the Twelfth of Sweden he was regarded as a freak monarch. The Emperor Charles the Sixth was not very friendly toward him. The treatment of his sister-in-law Charlotte, after she had married Alexis, had never been considered dignified. And it was still held against Peter that he had failed to carry out the provisions of the marriage settlement, had kept her in penury, and had subjected her upon occasion to personal insult. Alexis might have proved to be an excellent husband had wedded happiness not been frustrated by the Tsar. Politically, however, the Emperor had no desire to quarrel with Russia, and so he thought it wise at this point to try to obtain a refuge for Alexis outside his own dominions. George the First of England seemed a likely person to apply to—but George refused to be embarrassed.

It was proposed instead that the Tsarevitch go to Naples. He gladly agreed and, once more in disguise, with Afrosinia dressed as a page, he set out to seek shelter. This time, however, he had a body-

guard. He was conducted to the fortress of St. Elmo.[1] Captain Rumiantsef followed hot upon his heels, but once more was without success.

Following the War of the Spanish Succession and the Peace of Utrecht, Naples was not outside the dominions of Charles the Sixth. He was King of Naples from 1713 to 1735. He was therefore affording real protection to the Tsarevitch. He wrote at length to Peter on the subject, assuming that he was in reality doing a service to the Tsar by not allowing Alexis to fall into the hands of a nation hostile to Russia. He assured Peter, and that must have been very annoying, that he was doing his best to preserve the duty and affection which bound father and son.

The Tsar kept Rumiantsef on the scene. He might at any moment prove useful, and he sent the experienced and crafty Peter Tolstoy, the same who had worked and suffered so much for the Tsar in Turkey, quite the cleverest old man in Russia.

He was instructed to demand an explanation why the Tsarevitch, having been disobedient to his father, was afforded shelter, and why he had been confined under strong guard at Erenburg and at St. Elmo, and to ask if it was the intention of the Emperor to embark upon unfriendly action, because if so the Tsar would take measures accordingly.

Should the Emperor rely upon the excuse that the Tsarevitch had of his own free will placed himself under his protection, then Tolstoy was to urge that that was equivalent to condemning the father, that he, Peter, was an autocratic sovereign and was in no way subordinate to anyone, and that the Emperor had no jurisdiction. Both as sovereign and father he, Peter, had a complete right to the restitution of his son.

[1] 6th May.

The actual words of Peter's instructions now become very important in view of the actual fate which overtook the Tsarevitch when he returned to Russia. "It behoves the Emperor to send him back to us, and we as father and sovereign, with parental duty, will receive him kindly; we shall forgive him this his conduct and will direct him so that, abandoning his previous worthless courses, he may go forward on the path of virtue, following our intentions, and so can regain once more our paternal heart. And in that his Imperial Majesty shows him kindness he will merit God's reward and my thanks, and my son himself will be eternally grateful, except for that, that he is now detained as some prisoner or criminal under strong guard under the name of a rebel Hungarian Count, to the prejudice of our name and fame."

The hypocrisy and deceit of these words were not at the time manifest to Charles the Sixth, but afterwards when Alexis, having been promised pardon, was tortured and killed the cunning and duplicity of Peter were understood, and the Tsar's name did not recover from the slur.

Tolstoy was also instructed to seek permission to visit Alexis and to set out the Tsar's views of his conduct, but to offer him pardon if he would come back to Russia, and complete freedom of life and action there, and immunity from his anger or constraint, though his father reserved the right to reason with him about his life. If Alexis showed himself inclined to accept these conditions he was to be advised to write to the Emperor and ask permission to return home. If he still proved refractory he was to be warned that he would be placed under paternal and ecclesiastical ban—that is, presumably, cut off from inheritance and excommunicated. And if he

accepted that, still his father would not leave him alone, but would find means to punish him, even if he had to come with an army to do so.

The following personal letter was entrusted to Tolstoy, to deliver personally to Alexis:—

> "While thy disobedience and scorn of my will are known to all, and that neither words nor punishments have taught thee anything, but finally deceiving me and swearing by God at farewell, what hast thou done? Gone and put thyself, like a traitor, under foreign protection. Neither my other children nor any eminent subjects of mine have been guilty of such behaviour. What injury and grief and shame thou hast brought upon thy father, what shame to thy fatherland! Because of that I send this last letter to you to get you to do my will, concerning which Mr. Tolstoy and Rumiantsef will speak with thee, and make proposals. If thou art still in fear of me, then I assure thee, and promise by God and His judgment, that there will be no punishment of thee, but if thou wilt obey me and return I will show thee my best love. But if thou wilt not obey, then as father, with the power given me by God, I curse thee eternally, and as thy sovereign I denounce thee as a traitor, and I shall leave no means untried to bring thee to justice as a traitor and abuser of thy father. Yet remember I did not always use force with thee, and once wished to leave everything to thy will. What thou wishest, that do."

This letter was composed by Peter during the time when he was taking the waters at Spa in June

1717. On the 26th September it was delivered to Alexis at the fortress of St. Elmo at Naples, Tolstoy and Rumiantsef having obtained permission to visit him.

It had taken the Russian emissaries exactly two months to persuade the Emperor and Empress. Tolstoy and Rumiantsef had arrived in Vienna on 26th July. Charles the Sixth did not receive them very warmly, but they found a useful ally and dupe in the person of the mother-in-law of the Emperor and Alexis, the Duchess of Wolfenbüttel, who, having read a translation of the Tsar's letter, felt that she was called upon to do a great work in reconciling father and son. She was moved to this somewhat by the danger of the Tsar's curse falling upon the children of Alexis, her grandchildren.

It is perhaps remarkable that the Emperor did not entirely believe in the Tsar's sincerity. Possibly the wolf-snarl at the end of the letter was not entirely in keeping with the character of loving father. He was more impressed by the military danger of offending Peter, who had a large army in the field and might at a whim divert it into Silesia or Bohemia. He called a conference of his Ministers, and they thought it wiser to appear to give in to the Tsar. A courier would be sent, bearing Peter's letter to his son, and asking Alexis what he decided to do. He was not under arrest—he could go where he liked.

Tolstoy was afraid that upon receiving the letter Alexis would leave Naples forthwith and take refuge in some other country. So, the Duchess of Wolfenbüttel abetting him, he sought and obtained permission to deliver the letter personally.[1] The Duchess at the same time wrote Alexis a letter imploring him to

[1] 25th September.

trust his father, to go home, and avert the curse falling upon his children.

Alexis was no doubt greatly frightened by the visit of the two Russians. He was convinced that they had come with secret orders to murder him. He watched Rumiantsef, expecting at every moment the flash of his knife. When at last he was calm enough to read his father's letter he gave no sign of joy or relief or decision. He obviously distrusted it. If he could have relied on his father's promise there was not the slightest reason why he should not have gladly assented to return. But he knew the tenacity of purpose of his father, his revengefulness, unscrupulousness, and cunning. His father never had been bound by promises; he had no code of honour. Any means could be justified by the end in view. Therefore he said to Rumiantsef and Tolstoy that he had no answer to give them. He must reflect deeply on the matter.

Two days later the emissaries returned. Alexis then declared that he was afraid to go back to his father, and that he was notifying his protector, the Emperor, of the fact. The Viceroy of Naples was present, and had received instructions from the Emperor that he was to do his best to persuade Alexis to give in. Tolstoy and Rumiantsef stormed about the room, threatening war, and doing all they could to act upon the nerves of the Tsarevitch and scare him to a weak surrender. The Viceroy somewhat overdid his part, and no doubt exceeded his instructions; probably Tolstoy had made him a handsome present, he had funds at his disposal for such purposes. But Alexis, though weak of purpose, was not devoid of intelligence, and the violent remonstrances of the emissaries only convinced him that nothing

good awaited him in Moscow if he returned. If he had had any elasticity of nature or sense of humour he could have laughed them out of the fortress. But he met them instead with sullenness and Russian guile. "I will give my answer direct to my father," said he, "and that will be final."

It was impossible to understand in Vienna what was the real reason for the quarrel between father and son. That Alexis was weak was well known, but how interpret this resistance on the part of a weak man to what seemed a fair offer of pardon and return to grace? It was argued that there must be some cause of difference that was not mentioned in the letter from the Tsar, and the Court fell into the error of imagining that Peter and Alexis had quarrelled over Afrosinia. The Tsar wished his heir to give her up, and rather than do that he had fled. The presence of Afrosinia with him was thought to be the source of his obstinate resistance. It was decided to threaten to take her away from him.

This move took Tolstoy by surprise, but he was well pleased. He foresaw that something serviceable to his mission might result from it. At least it would show that the Emperor's protection was not absolute. He gave the secretary of the Viceroy a hundred and sixty golden chervoni, to exaggerate and put in a bad light all official proposals made to the Tsarevitch. Tolstoy was busy, and was enjoying his game of bluff. He lied much and often, and told Alexis that the Tsar was at the head of an army marching from Poland, and that he had a new letter from him in his own handwriting saying that the army was wintering in Silesia and that he, Peter, was coming in person to Italy to dig Alexis out. Alexis was told that the Emperor's protection would

last only as long as the Tsar's free pardon was held out to him.

The last was whispered in confidence to Alexis by the Viceroy's secretary. The Viceroy himself told him that Afrosinia would be taken away. Tolstoy did the rest. And Alexis began to waver. He said he would return on conditions: first, that he should not be separated from Afrosinia; second, that he should be allowed to live in the country in Russia. Tolstoy agreed verbally.

Next day Alexis said he was willing to set out together with Tolstoy and Rumiantsef, and asked them to write to his father again for pardon and ask permission to marry Afrosinia before he returned to St. Petersburg.

The hope of domestic happiness evidently calmed Alexis's fears. Tolstoy wrote to the Tsar recommending that permission be given.[1] "It will show the whole world that the trouble was about a wench. The marriage would deeply offend the Emperor. It would also remove the danger of his marrying some highborn lady in Vienna, a possibility not to be overlooked."

Alexis resolved to wait for an answer, and meanwhile made a pilgrimage to Bari to pray at the shrine of St. Nicholas the wonder-worker. Tolstoy and Rumiantsef accompanied him. After that the Tsarevitch went to see Rome. At last the Tsar's answer came. On the 17th November Peter replied from Petersburg:—

> "I received thy letter here, and answer briefly. Thou askest forgiveness. That has been given both verbally and in writing through Messrs. Tolstoy and Rumiantsef, and I now confirm it.

[1] October.

Of that you can be quite assured. As regards certain other wishes expressed by you, they will be granted, concerning which Mr. Tolstoy will make known my will.—Peter."

Peter declared to his emissaries that he was overjoyed at his son's submission, and that, having forgiven him so much, he was hardly likely to boggle at such requests. Alexis could live in the country if he wished, and he could marry Afrosinia—only the marriage must be solemnised on Russian soil or within the new conquered territories, say, at Riga.

As touching his son marrying a prostitute, that clearly did not shock Peter, for it was not unlike what he had done himself. Tolstoy perhaps overlooked that.

The party commenced the return journey. Alexis wished to call at Vienna to thank the Emperor for his kindness, but Tolstoy and Rumiantsef managed to spirit him through the city unknown to anyone. It was concluded that he was being removed by force, and indeed it is possible that he changed his mind again. The Governor-General of Moravia was sent to overtake the Russians and make personal inquiries, but Tolstoy and Rumiantsef would not permit him into the presence of the Tsarevitch. The Governor therefore detained them pending instructions. But the Emperor felt that perhaps after all he had done all that he could for Alexis, and it was better to be free of him and avoid further entanglements. A *laisser passer* was then given, and the Russians continued their journey with all the speed they might.

Alexis was morose, and then as he got nearer Russia more and more nervous. Afrosinia was in no condition to hurry, being far gone with child.

But Tolstoy and Rumiantsef could not agree to halt or linger till they were within Russian territory. The marriage did not take place even then, but the Finnish girl was left behind in child-bed at Riga. Alexis was rushed to the capital, which he reached early in the New Year.

XLVI

About the time when Peter returned to Petersburg, his old tutor and drinking-companion, the Patriarch of Mirth, Nikita Moiseevitch Zotof, died,[1] and it was necessary to find a successor. Although pre-occupied by the imminent home-coming of Alexis, the Tsar entered into this matter with the complete indulgence of his burlesque fantasy.

The predestined heir to the mock papal throne was Peter Ivanovitch Buturlin, who held the rank of Archbishop of Petersburg in the Church of Bacchus. But Peter, who was nominally only proto-deacon, would not appoint him by Imperial ukase, and chose instead to have him elected by a College of Cardinals after severe or humorous tests made with elaborate formalities.

He had read, or there had been read to him, a legend that once a woman pretending to be a man had become Pope of Rome and that during a procession in St. Peter's had given birth suddenly to a child—Pope Joan. This caused him much brutal mirth, and he decided to make an inquiry into the sex of candidates a special feature of the election. Special chairs with holes in their seats through which the private parts were to be exposed were made for the occasion.

A grand procession formed up one night outside the house of Buturlin, to march to the house of the dead Zotof—Catherine watching it from her carriage

[1] December 1717.

at a distance, by the light of many flaring tar-barrels. There were drummers and fifers and choristers playing and singing parodies of Church ritual, and following them came a dwarf all in black, the supposed secretary of the College of Cardinals, carrying his portfolio. There were cardinals in rows. General Golovin was a cardinal. Peter himself walked in a scarlet cloak. Following them came six aged stutterers, and then two Bacchic figures, perhaps intended for Bacchus and Silenus. They brandished pots, and their hair and clothes were in classical disarray. Sixteen drunken peasants bore them on a big wooden stretcher. There followed all manner of officials, officers, priests in burlesque costumes, and mock kings of France and mock Emperors of Germany. Romodanovsky, as Cæsar, walked alongside Peter decked out in marvellous habiliments.

Voltaire remarks cynically that this procession, with its raillery of the Kings of France, was Peter's answer to the students of the Sorbonne who had asked him to unite the Churches of East and West. But nothing in these buffonades was ever intended as a political gesture, or to be commented on abroad.

At Zotof's house the candidates were put on the chairs for the test of sex and, amid hoarse laughter, the testers, probably including Peter himself, firmly felt their genitals and called out in a loud voice, "Habet foramen! Habet!! Habet!!!"

While this was going on, the company in the yard and around the house beat upon empty barrels and tin cans, making a noise only comparable to that which accompanies the sex-rites of savages in Africa. The interior of the house was hung from the height of the stairway with dull-sounding leaden bells and clappers of wood and stone.

On a barrel-throne sat Romodanovsky, the Prince

Cæsar, and on his right was a huge cask with two holes, a sort of double pillory, in which the Bacchi were placed. They were no doubt incapable of remaining long in one place unless fixed there. It is said that eight days had been spent making them sufficiently drunk for the occasion. On the left of Cæsar's throne was a vacant chair for the future Pope. The candidates in their disgusting chairs were ranged around.

In another room ornamented with pendent birch-bark boots, were fourteen pew-boxes into which were introduced the cardinals. Peter locked them in and sealed the doors. Each cardinal could drink what else he pleased, but was obliged in any case to take a tablespoon of vodka every quarter of an hour. This went on for the rest of the night. At six in the morning Peter reappeared with the character known as the Princess-Abbess, naked from waist up, and bearing a basket of eggs. Each drunken cardinal had to stagger up to her and kiss her breasts before receiving his portion of eggs for voting purposes. Each cardinal before casting his egg made a ribald speech in praise of the qualifications of the man of his choice. And amid great obscenity, after a tie, Buturlin was declared Patriarch, and entered into a much-coveted position, being made free of the Tsar's cellars for life, receiving a house in Petersburg and another at Moscow, and a handsome annuity. The rest of the day of the election was spent in unrestrained carouse. Every one of the immense company had to kiss the new Patriarch on the lips or on the toe. The Princess-Abbess, with girl assistants, brought all the drunkards food. Peter managed to light up the greatest Bacchanalia of his reign.

Lesser orgies followed one another in rapid succession. Peter found or invited occasions for them every

week. An important feature of the election of Buturlin and other kindred affairs was the forced drinking. When Tolstoy reported on his success in bringing back the Tsarevitch he said, "At least I will not drink a fine for what I have done in Italy," referring to the habit of Peter of making those around him drink off whole bottles of strong liquor if found guilty of minor offences or of infringements of the new *bon-ton*. His Russians no doubt liked to drink, but he forced the pace. The childish and seemingly weak statement of Alexis that Peter tried to make him drink himself to death was therefore not so ridiculous as it seems upon first consideration.

Petersburg must have been a sort of hell to Alexis: it is for that reason that he went at once to Moscow. But the Tsar's malevolence against him greatly increased when he knew that he had him once more within his power. He rose from the Bacchanalia of Petersburg to go to the torture-chambers of Moscow.

XLVII

One of the baffling characteristics of the Tsar was the unaccountability with which he changed his mind. It was remarked abroad that no one knew what he would do next. His promises and programmes seemed to mean nothing permanent; they were merely temporary standing places. He did not feel bound to remain in them. No one knew just when to expect his arrival at a place, or his departure. If, when he came out of doors, his carriage was not waiting, he jumped into some one else's and drove away without any by your leave. If, at church, he felt a draught on his head, he snatched the nearest wig, even if it were that of the Mayor of Dantzig himself, and clapped it on his own head. No concern for others ever deterred him from following his impulses as they came. In this matter a characteristic not uncommon among the Slavs was exaggerated by his temperament and the practice of autocracy.

It is therefore possible, in partial extenuation of Peter's conduct, to declare an opinion that in the first place he did sincerely intend to grant Alexis full pardon. He must get the Tsarevitch home on any terms, and if a pardon were necessary he should have it. It is possible that he merely changed his mind when Alexis was on Russian soil once more. His sense of Tsardom meant that he had a complete right to change his mind whenever expedient. He did not feel himself accountable to humanity, nor to his people, nor to God. God was vague in his con-

science. Possibly, like a Roman Emperor, he came near confounding God with himself. Since he had suppressed the Patriarchate of the Orthodox Church God had become an esoteric aspect of Tsardom. The only sort of conscience he seems to have had was that attributed to Satan.

> The devil was sick, and the devil a saint would be,
> The devil got well, and the devil a saint was he.

In him was no remorse nor fear of remorse, no shame nor endeavour to avoid shame, no sense of guiltiness nor fear of hell or judgment. As rapidly as he recuperated from violent attacks of disease, as rapidly did he rise from the disgrace of Narva and the surrender on the Pruth. Mirth followed at once upon the tortures and executions of the Strieltsi. He saw no ghosts of conscience, those spectral visions which rise out of outraged moral consciousness in Shakespeare's plays. He was unlike Macbeth or Richard the Third.

Possibly Catherine played a considerable part in causing Peter to revoke his pardon. She naturally wished her son Peter Petrovitch to come to the throne. But if Alexis became Tsar, then automatically his son Peter Alexeevitch became heir, and if this Peter Alexeevitch in time begat a son, the whole succession might go through that line.

Menshikof and Catherine shared counsel and had mutual confidences which they did not always impart to the Tsar. Menshikof was extremely ambitious and ready to make full use of the intimate bond with Catherine. In the event of the Tsar's premature death they intended to run the country together for their own interests. Alexis was not mistaken in recognising that his life and freedom stood in the way of the ambitions of Menshikof and Catherine.

Peter was resolved as a first step in dealing with Alexis to have him publicly and solemnly removed from the succession, and to proclaim Catherine's child as heir in his place. Alexis had only been in Moscow a few days when he was arraigned before a mixed assembly of distinguished clerics and laymen in the Kremlin Palace.[1] The Tsar occupied the throne, and Alexis was brought before him without his sword. He understood the function as a public and official confession of his error in fleeing abroad. Peter opened the proceedings with a formal denunciation of his son's behaviour. Alexis then flung himself on his knees before him, accepting his father's accusation with complete submission, and having done so, with tears in his eyes, asked for the promised forgiveness. The Tsar, with the detachment of a judge, then said that though guilty and worthy of severe punishment, his mercy would be extended to him on two conditions: one, that he should renounce the succession, and two, that he should give the names of those who had advised him to flee the country.

Alexis agreed, and a parchment was handed him in order that he might now write a formal confession of his guilt.

> "Whereas having recognised my transgression before you as parent and sovereign, I wrote my confession and sent it from Naples, I make it now also: forgetting my duty as son and subject I went away to put myself under the protection of the Emperor and asked him to shield me. For that I ask gracious pardon and mercy."

The Tsar then bade him follow him into an adjoining room, and there he cross-questioned him as to the

[1] 3rd February.

names of those who had favoured his flight. After that Alexis was led to the Cathedral of the Assumption near by, where, standing before the Gospels, he made formal renunciation of his right to the throne and signed a promise on oath. The terms of the promise were these:—

> I, the undersigned, promise in front of the Holy Gospels that whereas I, for my offence against my sovereign and parent as described in His Majesty's statement and also in my confession, am deprived of the succession of the Russian throne, and rightly confess my guilt and unworthiness, I promise and swear by the Almighty, Glorious God in the Trinity, and His judgment, to obey the parental will in everything, and never at any time to seek the succession, nor to wish it, nor to take it under any excuse. And I recognise as the true heir my brother, Peter Petrovitch. Whereunto I kiss the holy cross and sign my name with my own hand."

The real significance of the Tsar's action was apparent in this document which named Catherine's child. Whatever might be urged against the legitimate heir, there was no valid reason for setting aside the son of Alexis.

The Tsar issued on the same day a manifesto wherein he justified his action in terms already familiar. He added that Alexis was worthy of death, but, feeling for him with a paternal heart, he had remitted all punishment. And he called upon all ranks, ecclesiastical and civil, to recognise the young Peter as heir to the throne, and he declared that all who should continue to recognise Alexis would be considered traitors to him and to their country.

But the process was merely begun. On the follow-

ing day Alexis was asked to make in writing a complete revelation of the conspiracy. If he hid anything he was warned that the pardon publicly pronounced the day before was not a pardon.

The Tsar's intentions were well understood by Kikin, who at once fled, but he was captured and taken to Menshikof at Petersburg. As there was a feud between the two men Menshikof had him tortured at the capital before sending him on to Moscow. He confessed his part, and then was conveyed to the Tsar, who ordered him twenty-five strokes of the knout, commonly enough to cause death, and he tried to find more to confess, though without success, for he was not imaginative. Two days later he made a written statement which neither helped himself nor anyone else, nor added anything to the knowledge of his inquisitors. He was twice more put to the torture, but could find nothing new to confess, certainly nothing that particularly incriminated the Tsarevitch. He was then condemned to a slow death and executed with the greatest barbarity and torment.

Ivan Afanasief, who was privy to the flight, was merely beheaded. Fedor Voronof was also executed, largely because Afanasief had told him that Alexis had fled, and he had provided Afanasief with a cypher for correspondence.

Prince Vassily Dolgoruky had been indicted by Kikin, but not by Alexis. He was arrested in Petersburg and brought to Moscow in chains. Not much was found against him. He was banished to Siberia. The tutor of Alexis, Viazemsky, was banished to Archangel.

Many friends of Alexis were put to the question, but nothing that further incriminated him was discovered. There was no Alexis faction comparable to the Narishkin faction. No group was plotting against

the Tsar. The worst that could be proved against the adherents of the ex-heir was that they would be ready to re-instate Alexis in his rights, persuading him that an oath given under duress was not binding.

Peter was well informed by his spies regarding what people of importance were doing and saying privately. That Alexis was popular and he unpopular was galling and dangerous. He was resolved to probe the matter to the uttermost and take a present vengeance on what might be enacted against him posthumously.

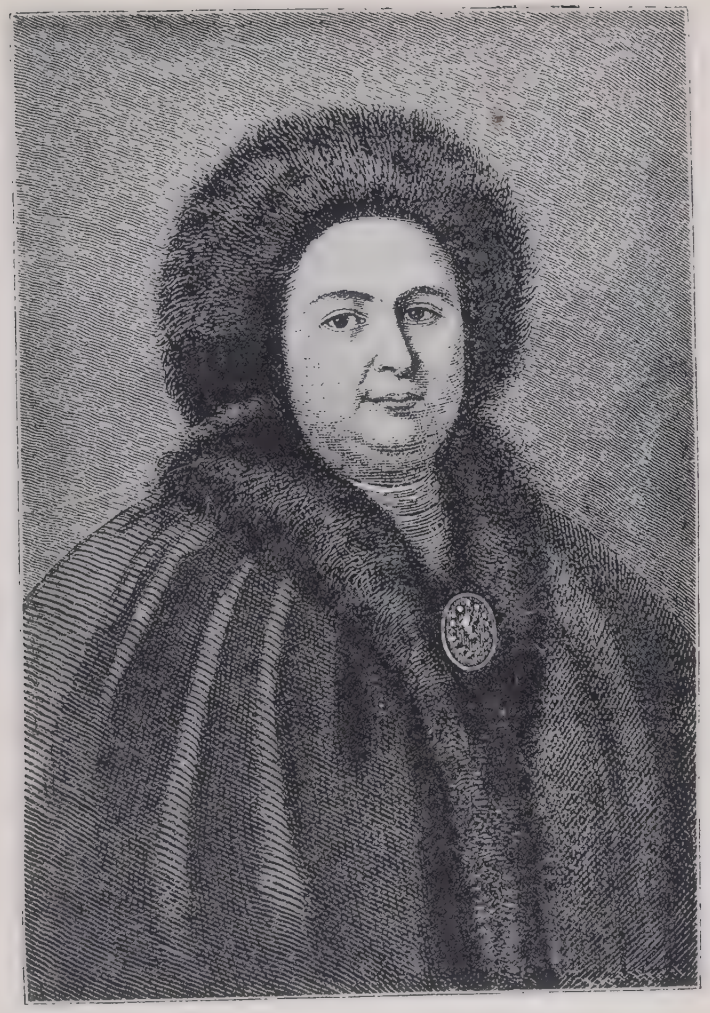
On the same day [1] that Alexis was removed from the succession Peter sent an army officer to the Convent of Suzdal, where Eudoxia, his wife, Alexis's mother, was confined as a nun. Captain of the guard, Skorniakof-Pisarev, had powers to convey the Tsaritsa to Moscow and to inform the Tsar as to what was going on at the convent. He reported many irregularities. Eudoxia was not subject to the discipline; she was dressed as a lay person; there was a tablet on the altar of the convent church remembering in prayer the Tsar and Tsaritsa, the names of Peter and Eudoxia commemorated together as if the Tsar had not put his wife away. He recommended the arrest of her kinsman, Abraham Lopukhin, and also of Prince Semen Scherbatof, and Andrew, the chief priest of the convent.

Eudoxia, forty-five years of age, twenty of which had been spent in a convent, was greatly alarmed by her arrest. On the way to Moscow she wrote a letter which she despatched by courier so that it should reach Peter ahead of her:—

"Most Gracious Sovereign,

Many years ago, which year I do not remember, I went to Suzdal Convent, taking the vows as

[1] 4th February.



The Tsaritsa Eudoxia

I had promised, and was given the name of Helen. After becoming a nun I wore monastic dress for half a year. But not greatly desiring to be a nun I gave it up and abandoned the dress, staying on quietly at the convent as a lay person in disguise. My secret has been revealed by Gregory Pisarev. Now I rely on the humane generosity of your Majesty. Falling at your feet, I beg mercy for my crime, and forgiveness, that I may not die a useless death. And I promise to go back to the life of a nun and remain in it till my death, and will pray God for thee, Sovereign.

"Your most humble slave, your past wife,
"Avdotia."

Peter sent for a number of nuns to be tortured and questioned. From them he learned that Eudoxia kept herself informed concerning the doings and health of Alexis. They gave the somewhat startling information that Eudoxia had had a love-affair with a recruiting-officer, Stephen Glebov. There was much birching and knouting of nuns. Peter in his later years developed a taste for flogging women, and it is said that upon occasion on the merest whim he would seize a young girl, undress her, and flog her. He kindled his own rage with cruelty, exaggerated or invented crime which in turn enraged him further, so that his passion could only be allayed with more flagellations, tortures, executions.

No political crime could be urged against the unfortunate Glebov. Eudoxia confessed she had slept with him: he also had to agree to that. But tortured, knouted, and at last impaled, this stout soldier would say nothing that incriminated others. With a sharp stake in his rectum slowly gouging him to death with

excruciating pain, he nevertheless spat in the face of the Tsar, who came to look at him in his torment. Nothing further was found against him personally beyond his liaison with Eudoxia. His son, therefore, was brought to the tribunals and forced to say all he knew about his father's guilt. In this way another story was unearthed. It was that Bishop Dosithei of Rostof, when he visited the convent of Suzdal, had had a vision and had prophesied concerning the Tsaritsa that she would again return to share the throne.

Dosithei was arrested and publicly unfrocked. He was a brave man, not afraid even in such terrible danger to say out what was in his heart. "Go to the people," said he to his fellow-bishops at the ceremony of removing his ecclesiastical rank. "Incline your ears! What do they say? What is in everyone's heart to-day?"

Under torture the Bishop gave further details of vision and prophecy, and confessed that he prayed for the soul of Eudoxia as that of the true Tsaritsa. He did not pray for Catherine as Tsaritsa. In this doubtless he was like many others who escaped question. He said that he had wished the Tsar might die and his son reign in his place. Part of his prophecy had been that Peter would eventually take back Eudoxia and that they would have two more children, possibly said to comfort the cast-off Queen, rather than actually seen in vision.

Dosithei's name was changed to Diomedes, and then, as plain Brother Diomedes, he was broken on the wheel and his entrails were torn out and burned, and his head was set on a pole.

Others who were mere convent gossips—nuns must have something to talk about—were, after torture, beheaded. That was the fate of the sub-deacon Ivan

Pustinny, and the chorister Zhuravsky. Princess Anastasia Golitsin, for bringing news from convent to convent, was birched. Her disgrace at Court was only overlooked on her agreeing to be Princess-Abbess in the Petersburg orgies. The Tsar, however, spared the life of Eudoxia. He sent her to stricter confinement to an island convent on Lake Ladoga. It was perhaps inexpedient at that moment to execute the mother of Alexis. Nothing further against the Tsarevitch had been brought to light. From a human point of view his callousness was remarkable. It is not recorded that he asked that his mother, or his friends, or anyone else, might be pardoned. On the contrary, he sat with his father at dinner in the midst of these punishments and felt glad that he had shaken off at last the responsibility and danger of being heir.

It is perhaps idle to reflect that had Alexis been a man of strong character he would have been executed in February, but being weak he lived till July. There was no generosity towards strength and bravery in Peter. He was not noble in the Greek sense, nor in the British tradition, nor romantic like a hero of Scott or Dumas.

One may take as an example of Peter's lack of grace his treatment of one of the bravest of the adherents of Alexis, a patriotic clerk called Larion Dokukin. Dokukin had voiced popular discontent and had been shielded by Alexis, and in return he evidently felt great devotion toward the Tsarevitch. He would not accept the forced renunciation of the succession, nor swear loyalty to the new heir, Peter Petrovitch. Instead, he wrote below the form of oath:—

> "Because of the unmerited separation and expulsion from the Russian throne of the sovereign

Tsarevitch, preserved by God, Alexis Petrovitch, I shall not by my Christian conscience, God's judgment, and the most holy Gospels, take an oath against him; for this I shall not kiss the life-giving Cross of Christ; nor will I sign this with my hand. I offer with this a small extract from a book of divinity by Nazianzin, which amply justifies my action. And although for this the Tsar's wrath come upon me, if it be the will of the Lord my God, Jesus Christ, then by His holy will am I ready, Ilarion Dokukin, slave of Christ, to suffer for the truth. Amen. Amen. Amen."

Dokukin handed this statement and the extract from Nazianzin to Peter personally. Peter's reply was to have him thrice tortured and then broken on the wheel.

It is somewhat remarkable that Dokukin consummated his act of faith in a written defiance, and not in assassination. But despite his vast unpopularity, his manifest injustices, and his almost incredible cruelty, no one ever attempted Peter's life. Opportunity to assassinate him was always at hand; he took no personal precautions for his safety. His immunity was perhaps due to the physical fear he inspired.

Alexis was relieved, and thought that the storm had passed when, after a month of Preobrazhenskoe and Moscow, Peter decided to return to Petersburg. Alexis went with his father, being anxious to meet Afrosinia, who was due back from her confinement at Riga. But the son did not know what was in his father's mind. The lugubrious, pitiful face of Alexis fronted the cats' whiskers and roving eyes of Peter in the post-sleigh and at the post-stations. They drank,

they ate, they conversed, they made comforting assumptions regarding the future.

Alexis is going to be done to death because he has kept something back; he has not confessed all his secret thoughts to his father. One thing has swallowed all other hopes and fears in Alexis—that is, his passion for Afrosinia. There is an intimate love-bond such as never existed between him and Charlotte. He must have babbled inconsequently and indiscreetly to this Afrosinia. Afrosinia shall be seized when she arrives and made to reveal all. That is the secret thought of Peter as they journey together to the new capital. He will get from her evidence that may warrant his putting his son to death.

The Tsar was doubtless perplexed by his very sane practical judgment obtruding upon his mania. The execution of his son would be bad policy. The forced renunciation of the throne was bad policy. It made his name stink at Vienna. Perhaps it was also bad domestic policy. It might mean that after his death Menshikof would seize the throne. He already suspected Menshikof of intrigue. He had helped Menshikof by executing his enemy Kikin, and banishing one of his most capable rivals, Dolgoruky. His temper had betrayed him to inexpedient action. Therefore ever and anon he was polite to Alexis. The civilised and Western Peter looked out from those strange eyes, to give way when some surge of malevolence swept through him to dreadful Tamerlane.

One thing can be urged in favour of the character of Alexis, and that is that never, even in the worst extremity of torment, did he ever say anything that could incriminate his mistress. He would never admit that she had dreamed of being Tsaritsa, or of wishing Peter's death that she might return in triumph with

Alexis. Even at the last Alexis did all he could to shield her—and he was successful.

But Afrosinia was no heroine. At the mere suggestion that she would be flogged she showed herself ready to remember everything indiscreet Alexis had ever said to her, and she was at pains to think out details that would be damaging to him. Some contempt has been heaped on Alexis for taking a Finnish mistress; but after all Peter himself took a Livonian mistress. It had been more popular had they allied themselves to Russian women, and it is sometimes said that no Russian woman could have betrayed her lover so callously as Afrosinia did hers. But the terrible power of Peter to make people say what was in their minds must be remembered.

Afrosinia arrived in Petersburg in the middle of April. She was at once seized and taken to the fortress dungeons. According to some accounts her child had been born at Riga; according to others it was born in the fortress. Peter himself examined her and obtained the evidence he required.[1] Alexis had written several letters to the Emperor at Vienna denouncing his father. When there was a rumour of mutiny in the Russian army Alexis rejoiced, saying, "God may grant us the opportunity of returning happily." When he read in a newspaper that Catherine's boy was ill he said, "Father wants things his way, but God wants them His." He had written letters to certain bishops declaring his intention of abandoning Petersburg when he became Tsar and of reverting to traditions. He would not keep up a fleet, and the army would be cut down to a force adequate for defensive purposes, and he would avoid war, taking pleasure in Russia as she was, wintering in Moscow and spending the summer at Yaroslavl.

[1] 20th April.

There was little that was new in all this. The state of mind of Alexis was familiar to Peter. It was because he would have probably gone back on what Peter had done that he had long since wished to remove him from the succession. Alexis had said as evil things when he was living with his wife Charlotte. But it was evidence that could be sworn to, and on which a new case against Alexis could be based.

The Tsar's rage was re-kindled by what he heard, but it did not flame up into immediate action. The woman was liberated; Alexis was not arrested. The Tsar took the couple about with him wherever he went, sometimes falling upon Alexis with the fearsome cudgel which he carried always in his hand, sometimes reverting to a cold cross-examination of either Alexis or Afrosinia or both.

They went to Peterhof in May, Peter's pleasure-gardens, his Versailles, and there the flogging, torturing, questioning process went on. Little is known in detail of what occurred in this ghoulish terrible two months between the giving of evidence by Afrosinia and the arrest of Alexis on the 14th June. On the morning of that day the guards arrived at his house and took him to the fortress.

Peter had on the day before the arrest addressed a manifesto to the clergy, calling upon a number of leading ecclesiastics to give him Scriptural guidance as to what he should do with his guilty son.[1] Apparently he wished to obtain from the Church a written and signed authorisation as to the punishment of his son—that his conscience might be clear.

The clergy might have given him what he wanted had they kept to the Old Testament, but their unanimity was wrecked by the parable of the prodigal son. After five days' discussion a signed statement

[1] 13th June.

was offered to the Tsar. In this statement Peter was told that if he wished to pardon his son, he could find many examples in Holy Writ. Stephen Yavorsky and his bishops were not entirely servile to the throne, and though they might have come out whole-heartedly for pardon and have reminded Peter of his oath in the name of God and of God's judgment, that he would pardon his son, they did at least point to Christ and the parable of the prodigal and Christ's words concerning the woman taken in adultery.

As this was of no use for the purpose he had in mind, Peter resolved to use the Senate instead of the Church. Alexis was therefore brought out of the fortress and appeared to answer for himself before the Senate.[1] But even this body, creature as it was of Peter's own hands, hesitated to express the opinion that Alexis was worthy of death. It is possible, however, that the Tsar prompted the Senate as to its line of action. The crafty and servile Tolstoy presided, and it is difficult to detect in his nature any human kindness or sympathy. He asked for more evidence before he could come to a decision. At that baleful signal Alexis was taken out and knouted almost to death. In extremity he agreed that he had wished his father's death, and that he had confessed it as a sin to his father-confessor, who had replied, "God will forgive thee, for we all wish it."

The Confessor, Jacob Ignatief, was then seized and put to the torture, and he confirmed what Alexis had said.

What exactly was the process of knouting out the truth it is difficult to say, unless there was intermittence and questioning between blows, and false promises of remission of punishment. The weak-bodied Prince must soon have been in no state to

[1] 19th June.

answer questions. But those who dealt with him were able to repeat a lot of babble about what he did and thought at the time of his flight abroad, nothing new. The only new thing was the desire for his father's death, and that was a mere thought. The Senate found some difficulty in proceeding—or else Peter himself hesitated.

Three days elapsed, and then Tolstoy received a memorandum from the Tsar,[1] asking him to engage Alexis in conversation without torture, and obtain answers to three questions, for his information—" Why did he not obey me? Why was he so little afraid of punishment? Why did he wish to keep the succession by a method other than obedience? "

Tolstoy went to the fortress and there wrote suitable answers to the questions. Alexis must have received him with complete apathy; having been beaten almost to death three days before, it is unlikely that he was very communicative. Death was certain; only the mode was uncertain. It would be unwise to assume that Tolstoy's written answers did actually derive from Alexis—" I spent most of the time of my youth learning to play the hypocrite, a part to which I am by nature inclined. . . . Menshikof alone did me good . . . others led me to gad about with priests and monks . . . my fearlessness comes from my bad character. . . . I chose the other road because I thought I could get my way by force of foreign arms. . . ."

Tolstoy must have reported that Alexis still had enough physical strength to make some rejoinder when sentence of death should be passed. There was only one refuge and strength for the victim, and that lay in his religion, and in God. On the morning of the day after Peter received Tolstoy's reply [2] Alexis

[1] 22nd June. [2] 24th June.

received fifteen more blows from the knout. Later in the day the tribunal, which was largely composed of Senators, pronounced him, for his faults and crimes against father and sovereign, worthy of death. The manifesto which the Court signed traverses somewhat negligently the question of the Tsar's promised pardon. In the first case it is stated that Alexis did not return from Naples of his own free-will. That is supposed to have cleared the first pardon. The second pardon given at Moscow was only on condition that Alexis hid nothing. It had been proved that he hid much. So that pardon also was forfeited. The reply obtained by Tolstoy to the Tsar's questionnaire of 23rd June was used, and especially the reply to question No. 3.

> "The Tsarevitch was not willing to await the death of his father and sovereign to receive the succession to the throne, but was ready with the aid of mutineers to take it by force, and not only that, but he placed his reliance on foreign aid and armed intervention. . . . In that way the Tsarevitch has shown himself wholly undeserving of that mercy and forgiveness which his father and sovereign had promised him."

The judges found that by divine law, ecclesiastical law, civil law, and military law, the Prince was adjudged guilty of a two-fold murderous intention: one, to kill the father of his country, the other, to kill his natural father, and they declared that he merited execution without any mercy.

> "This sentence we pronounce as slaves and subjects, with heavy heart and overflow of tears, knowing that as subjects of an autocrat we are unworthy of making such a high judgment,

especially on the son of the autocratic and most gracious Tsar, yet emboldened by his desire to declare our sincere opinion and judgment, we do so therefore with a clear and Christian conscience such as we would bring without shame to the dreadful, righteous, and unhypocritical judgment of Almighty God, submitting, however, this our judgment and sentence to the autocratic power and the merciful decision of his Majesty the Tsar, our most gracious monarch."

This was signed by Menshikof, Apraxin, Golovkin, Tikhon Apraxin, Peter Shafirof, Peter Tolstoy, Dmitri Golitsin, Andrew Matveyef, Golovin, and many others, to the number of over a hundred.

While by one act the Tsar blotted out all pretension to moral greatness, it is impossible not to reflect that all those who signed this manifestly false document cast a slur upon their names and families. It takes cowards to serve tyrants, and brave men to defy them. If anyone in that Court had refused to sign he would most probably have been taken to the torture-chamber and ultimately put to a cruel death. No one even dare argue a line of defence for Alexis.

A day elapsed, and then, at eight in the morning of the 26th June, Peter, Menshikof, Tolstoy, Golovkin, and others visited the cell in the fortress where Alexis lay. They brought instruments of torture, and they stayed with their victim until eleven. At six in the evening of the same day he was found dead.

XLVIII

No one knows exactly the manner of the end of Alexis. Peter declared that he died of apoplexy, following the reading to him of the sentence of death. It is probable that the death-sentence was actually read to him that morning, and it seems also probable that, having pronounced the sentence, it was carried out there and then by Peter himself. The records bear witness that he was tortured that last morning. It was probably intended that he should die under that last torment. The story goes that even in that he exasperated his father by not dying, and that Catherine, to finish the matter off, sent a surgeon to cut his veins.

There were many rumours. The Dutch resident, De Bie, informed his Government that Alexis was finally bled to death by the severing of arteries. His despatches were seized, and he was forced to leave the country. Pleyer, the representative of the Emperor, reported that Alexis was beheaded. A girl from Narva is said to have been introduced into the fortress during the day of the 26th June to sew the head on to the body. For the dead Tsarevitch was to lie in state on the morrow.

The manner of the actual end does not seem to be very important. From the time of his arrest till the day of his death he was treated with terrible cruelty. One man was responsible for this treatment; that man desired his death, and desired that death should be accompanied by every physical torment. It was his father. It was Peter.

The Court by special ukase wore no mourning, because the Tsarevitch had died a criminal. Next day was the anniversary of the victory of Poltava, and it was celebrated with the customary salutes and fireworks and drunkenness. The Tsar was apparently in great good humour, as if a heavy burden had been cast from his mind. The dead Alexis lay in the Cathedral, before the Altar, with face and head uncovered, and all who wished might come and kiss him farewell and pray to meet him in the resurrection. This was done formally by Peter and Catherine, and presumably by many others who had consented to his death. Four days later he was buried quietly, without parade or unusual ceremony, and placed by the side of the dead Charlotte.

An inventory was made of the belongings of Alexis, and a good share was given to Afrosinia, who, with her child, disappears henceforth into untroubled oblivion.

What Russia thought of the judicial murder of Alexis is not chronicled, except in endless legends of his supposed escape. The Church shuddered. And the whole nation suffered. The crime entered into the national consciousness and remained a seed of hate and revenge. The new city of Petersburg was associated with the deed. For it was the first great prominent historical action in the new capital.

Abroad, the death did not have such great significance. The causes of the quarrel between father and son were wrapt in obscurity. Only in Vienna and Rome did the enormity of the Tsar's perjury and cruelty make the astounding impression which was due. For the rest, Peter remained a great personal force in Europe, with strong army and navy, immense resources and vast conquests, a potentate to be respected, whatever barbarities were reported of him.

But Peter became embarrassed in his foreign relations. He did not visit Europe again. It was perhaps too much to have to answer the politest questions on the subject of Alexis. He had turned away from civilisation. Nothing he had learned in the West taught him this barbarity. This was a reversion to the cruelty of the Tartars. He said he admired Ivan the Terrible, who also murdered his son, and that Ivan was one of the best monarchs Russia ever had. But such an opinion came ill from the correspondent of Leibnitz and the admirer of Holland and England.

It will be seen that the murder of Alexis marks the turning-point in the career of Peter. Nothing he did after that time merits the appellation of greatness. That is not to say he was conscious now of failure. Depression did follow, but not in the first few months. The immediate consequence was a sense of relief. It was as if he had suddenly recovered from a mental disease. His wits were keener. He then felt as if he had a stronger hold upon happiness and the future. He congratulated Catherine; their son's succession now seemed assured. He had a medal struck, as if he wished to commemorate a victory. On this medal his crown is seen resting on a high mountain from which clouds are lifting, letting in the streaming radiance of the sun. For device it has the words: "Thy majesty is clear everywhere."

The cloud of Alexis had been lifted, but Peter overlooked the wrath of God. Such a crime has to be paid for in history. Every bomb hurled against the Romanoffs took some force from this. One may even see a connection between the murder of Alexis in 1718 and the mass murder of Nicholas the Second and his family at Ekaterinburg just two hundred years

later. For the sins of the fathers are visited upon succeeding generations. While there was not much idealism in Peter's life, there was this—that he cared for what might happen after his death. He was, as it were, vulnerable in history. It is curious that two hundred years later the dynasty should cease to rule, the city that he built to be capital should be debased and renamed, and almost all his great conquests on the Baltic should pass into foreign hands.

The summer of 1718 passed, and the winter came, without any striking happenings in Russia. There was considerable correspondence with foreign Courts. The Tsar had notified Europe that Alexis died of a fit of apoplexy. Pleyer's report of the murder in prison caused considerable ill-feeling, Peter demanding the recall of the Viennese ambassador. Ostermann and Bruce represented Peter at the Aland Peace Conference and played with the intriguer, Goerz. Peter did not care to go to the Conference himself. In November his great rival, Charles the Twelfth, was killed, and Ulrica became Queen of Sweden. Peter's grip on foreign affairs noticeably weakened. The mock Patriarch, Buturlin, became his winter crony, and he was more than ever obsessed by the mad rites of his Princess-Abbess and the freaks he had lodged about him. The restraint of Catherine did not count for much. She was herself a woman of gross and sensual appetites, and took advantage of the Tsar's drunkenness to have her own affairs. The Tsar spied on her doings, but she and Menshikof had their counter-espionage, and it was long before any of Catherine's private business got to the knowledge of her husband. Catherine began to be more important than Peter. Her influence was sought and bought by all manner of people and, to make

provision for her future, she began to invest money abroad.

One of the reforms which had redounded to the credit of Peter was the emancipation of Russian women. Women were much more free than they had ever been before, and, becoming less guarded, their immorality increased. The Tsar encouraged immorality by his example, and showed always a strong interest in sexual obscenity. But, strangely enough, his liberalism did not extend to his own wife, although she might almost have been called a prostitute before he took her. He might have as many affairs as he liked, but she must remain inviolably his. Cæsar's wife must be above suspicion. It is not probable that he suspected Catherine at this time. His egoism precluded suspicion. But he kept his spies about, that she might understand that in any case it could never be safe for her to deceive him.

She, for her part, was not jealous. It did not disturb her if he took a fancy to a new laundress or lady-in-waiting. She even interceded for the life of one of them who was doomed by the Tsar. This was in the strange case of Mary Hamilton, who in February 1719 was arrested for infanticide.

In the chain of events which express Peter's cruelty, the torture and execution of Mary Hamilton follow after the murder of Alexis. Mary Hamilton, granddaughter of that Hamilton who married Matveyef,[1] belonged to a Scottish family settled in Russia since the time of Ivan the Terrible. Her story is like a mirage from the story of that other Mary Hamilton who in like case suffered a similar fate. The Tsar had possessed her and abandoned her. She had another lover. She did not let her child live. The

[1] See p. 14.

lover, Orlof, a coward or a fool, incontinently betrayed her when threatened by Peter's cudgel. Orlof was only suspected of pilfering in the Tsaritsa's house and using Mary Hamilton for that purpose. He told his sovereign that his mistress had had children and got rid of them.

The Tsar chose to see in this a great offence, an infringement of Divine law. Others have explained that Peter was angry at losing potential soldiers, which seems absurd. But he rose to the opportunity of having the lady flogged and otherwise tortured, he himself being present and perhaps taking a hand. His perverse eyes took pleasure in her writhing charms. He made love to her through the medium of torture and death, and even stood beside her at the scaffold.

On the day of execution [1] Mary Hamilton dressed herself in a gown of white silk ornamented with black ribbons. For she still believed that her charm had power to win pardon. It was a windy early morning in March; a small crowd had assembled. Peter had been up since dawn pursuing his usual round of work, and the execution coming as it were in his time-table, he was there when the victim was led out. Sentence was read: there were three charges; first, that Mary Hamilton had lived in sin; second, that by the use of medicine she had twice discharged her pregnancy; third, that she had strangled a child at birth. For these she was to be beheaded.

All was in readiness, the expert arch-knouter was there with his axe—none defter in removing heads. Mary fell on her knees and implored mercy. The Tsar said he was sorry for her, but she had offended against Divine law. And as she knelt there he sud-

[1] 19th March.

denly turned to the headsman and whispered something in his ear. Those present thought that it meant a last-minute reprieve. Quite the contrary! Suddenly the axe gleamed in the air, and the head of the maid-of-honour flew from her shoulders.

Peter then picked up the head with both hands and, looking at the face, kissed it on the lips. He turned and addressed a few words to the assembly on the subject of the anatomy of a skull. He then kissed the head again, threw it down to earth, crossed himself, and went away.

He gave orders, however, for the head to be preserved in a jar of spirit and kept as a specimen in the hall of the Academy of Science. There it was discovered many years later in the reign of Catherine the Second and decently buried.

It may be observed that there was nothing Latin in the temperament of Peter. He pronounced no oration. The stage was set for a Nero, but his streak of madness did not lead him to the romantic pose. Curiosity, the desire for new sensations, must have led him to this last rendezvous with his mistress. He is still the " teacher of his people."

But there was no justification in Russian morals and tradition for the execution. Getting rid of undesired children was common enough then as now. But it fitted in with the Tsar's conceit to have Mary Hamilton flogged and beheaded and kissed dead.

The year 1719 was one of gloom. The Alexis crime began to cast a shadow, like a tree growing between Peter and the light. Both Catherine and her husband began to be clouded in mind and have morbid preoccupations. The Tsaritsa was much troubled by a dream. Both she and Peter recorded their dreams. The interesting parts of Peter's dreams,

as recorded by himself in his own handwriting, would probably have afforded significant material for the modern psychologist. But someone erased the writing. Catherine's dream of January, 1719, was preserved. She saw in her sleep two beasts, one very angry and the other fawning, and the angry one kept crying out the words "Saldoreph! Saldoreph!" while the fawning beast walked purring around with a crown and three lighted candles on its head.

No one could interpret the mysterious word "Saldoreph," but the dream seems to be the expression of a sub-conscious anxiety about the succession of her son to the throne. Peter Petrovitch, who was now three years old, was not a sturdy child. He could neither walk nor talk. It seems to have been rare for the strength of the Romanof family to be transmitted through the male issue. Still, neither Peter nor Catherine could have anticipated the dire calamity which overtook their union in April 1719, when the young heir sickened and died. The idolised *Shishenka* perished.[1]

The "brother"—step-brother—to whom Alexis had been forced to swear allegiance, and in hope of whose succession he had been removed, was recalled by God who gave him. In vain the proclamation of 3rd February 1718 and the oath which everyone was forced to take to little Peter Petrovitch.

Catherine and Peter had no other son. Orthodox people at once assumed Divine interposition. Some at least must have seen a visitation of God's anger upon the Tsar. Almost all now agreed that the neglected child of Alexis and Charlotte would become Tsar after Peter died. It was like a repetition in ghostly whisper of a sentence in the evidence against

[1] 19th April.

Alexis:—"Father wants things to go his way; God wants them His."

Peter met the grief with apathy and made no new provision for the succession. It was inconvenient to proclaim Peter Alexeevitch heir. Possibly he hoped that Catherine might yet bear another boy.

XLIX

The Tsar spent the summer in Petersburg, which he was now greatly concerned to embellish. He caused an expert artificial gardener, Gaspar Focht, to arrive, and together they planned the planting of the Summer Gardens. The long avenues were planted with lime trees, some of which, though in bad condition, survived till the twentieth century. Oaks and fruit trees were planted. Peter had great elms brought from Moscow and little wych-elms from Kief. Cypresses were ordered from Solikamsk, barberry and dwarf roses from Dantzig. There were sweet peas and spiræa and lilies, and indeed many other flowers, brought from remote parts of Russia and from abroad. Up to Peter's time neither houses nor cities had flower-gardens. Other novelties that he introduced in his new Western city were fountains and cascades. Fountains had been built in the Summer Gardens, and in the basin of one a seal disported itself.

The business of arranging terms of peace with Sweden was left to two clever foreign charlatans, Osterman and Bruce. They were not successful in making a deal, for while they were flitting to and fro between Petersburg and Aland, England was arranging a separate peace with the Swedes. George the First, anxious to obtain confirmation of his title to Bremen and Verden, was willing to pay Sweden a million thalers indemnity. The cities were then recognised as belonging to Hanover rather than to England.

Peter, enraged by the dilatoriness of the Swedes, resolved to punish them. In July he sent Apraxin with the Baltic fleet to terrorise the coasts. A Russian army was landed to lay waste southern Sweden even to the gates of Stockholm. The Cossacks and the Kalmouks were let loose upon northern civilisation, and they destroyed one hundred and thirty-five villages, forty mills, nine steel-works. They captured and looted the towns of Osthammer and Oregrund. They rode to the environs of the capital, killing and plundering. Enormous booty was taken. But, strangely enough, the Swedish Government kept its nerve and refused to make terms under such duress. The Swedes grew more sullen; the punishment was a failure. When Osterman, bearing a white flag, was admitted into Stockholm, he found the enemy in a defiant frame of mind. The majority of the Swedish Senate was opposed to peace-making. The Queen said to him, "I wonder that you should come here with proposals of peace while Russian troops outside are burning and destroying." "Make a preliminary agreement, and the troops will at once be called off," said Osterman. But everyone, high and low, was so enraged by the burning of the farms that there was not the slightest opening for peaceful bargaining. Had there been military leadership in the country it is possible that a new war would have been enkindled by this invasion of the Swedish fatherland. The emissaries of George the First did all they could to encourage the bellicose feeling, promised support, bribed.

The Tsar desired a complete settlement. England and Hanover wished to separate the interests of Prussia and Russia on any terms. Queen Ulrica offered to give up Revel, Narva, and Esthonia to Peter, if Livonia and Finland were restored to her.

But she did not give her representatives to the Aland Conference authorisation to ratify even that. On August 21st Peter made a final appeal that delegates with full powers be sent to the Conference. The Queen in reply called back what representatives she had at Aland—the conference came to an end.

At the same time the affairs of the Tsar passed under a shadow both at Vienna and at Berlin. In both these Courts the hostility of George the First to the Russians played considerable part. But for George, peace would probably have been concluded in 1719 instead of being postponed till 1721. The might of England, harnessed to ambitious and troublesome Hanover, made a disturbing factor. For no one could be sure to what the English Parliament might commit itself. England was, in fact, indifferent, and George the First's power to control matters on the Baltic was exaggerated both in the eyes of foreign Powers and in his own.

By the acquisition of Verden and Bremen, which seemed at last guaranteed by the final treaty with Sweden,[1] Hanover gained an outlet to the sea and English commerce seemed greatly benefited in that ships had access to a friendly State in the heart of Germany and might therefore sail up the Weser and the Elbe with almost as much confidence as on the Thames. The Tsar did not oppose these acquisitions, but his domination of Mecklenburg did not promise well for their security in the future. George doubtless had some personal animosity against Peter, with whom he chose steadfastly not to co-operate. The Tsar was supposed to have been ready to back the deposed Stuarts, but he never did. It was also surmised that he was lending his support to the

[1] 1718.

hostile intrigue being carried on by Alberoni in Spain.

George spoke no English, and his Ministers no German. He is commonly represented as stupid and sensual. But he was probably not so stupid as English people thought. As a Hanoverian he was clever enough. Hanover meant more to him than England, and he had accepted the throne of England in order to make Hanover more important in Europe. His daughter was Queen of Prussia, and he was able to offer Friedrich Wilhelm the prospect of a very valuable alliance. Friedrich Wilhelm should guarantee Verden and Bremen, and cut loose from the Tsar. In return, George would guarantee Stettin and its adjacent territory to Friedrich Wilhelm. Friedrich Wilhelm should also oblige himself to lend aid in case the throne of England should be menaced, since that throne might eventually become an inheritance of Prussia.

When the Russians got wind of this, Tolstoy was sent to demand the inclusion of the Tsar in any treaty Friedrich Wilhelm made with George the First. The alternative was the breaking off of all relations. The Prussians saw great advantages in the signing of the treaty with England, but could not face the risk of breaking with Russia. Tolstoy and Golovkin managed, by a series of bluffs, to postpone royal ratification of the treaty. But they soon discovered that it had already been signed by the Prussian Chancellor Ilgen and other responsible Ministers. Friedrich Wilhelm kept assuring them of his continued friendship with Peter, but at last he did sign the treaty with England. And Tolstoy left Berlin, Friedrich Wilhelm went to Hanover to shake hands with his father-in-law. Whitworth, the English envoy, had a notable success.

In Vienna the English and Hanoverians found it even more easy to work against Russia. The Tsar showed surprising sensitiveness to foreign opinion regarding the death of Alexis. He insisted that Pleyer, who had passed on the murder story, should be recalled to Vienna. The Emperor and the Empress naturally gave credence to Peter's monstrous act, because it confirmed those fears which the terrified Alexis had breathed to them when seeking their protection. The proclamation of Peter Petrovitch as heir had also been an affront to the Empress, since it overlooked the claim of her sister Charlotte's child. But these events did not force the Emperor to break off relations with Russia. They only prepared the way for a break. The aggravating insistence on the recall of Pleyer prepared the way further, but it was George who used the situation to the Tsar's disadvantage, by pointing out to the Emperor where his material interests lay.

The Tsar had outlived his fear of Turkey, and had long since regarded an essential part of the peace treaty as a dead letter. He moved his troops back and forth over Polish soil at will. He disregarded with equal negligence the Porte, the Polish Parliament, and Augustus. He had even threatened to make war on the Empire, marching through southern Poland to Bohemia or Silesia. The personal bond between Augustus and Peter had been broken, largely because of the inactivity of Augustus in the northern campaign. Augustus had been deprived by his Parliament of the use of Polish troops in such adventures, and his Saxons had not proved of much value. Augustus, mortified by neglect, went over to the English side in the great intrigue. In the separate English settlement with Sweden George promised to safeguard the interests of Augustus.

A double diplomatic onslaught upon Peter's policy then started from Vienna: two requests; first, that the Russian troops be evacuated from Mecklenburg, and secondly, that the Russian troops in Poland be removed, and that henceforth no Russian units enter Poland without the permission of the Emperor and the Polish Parliament. As a demonstration of earnestness, twenty-five thousand men were mobilised on the borders of Bohemia and Silesia. The Emperor further strengthened his hands by signing a treaty with his ancient enemy the Turk. The bluffing of Veselovsky and his diplomatic delaying actions could not prevent the signing of a treaty of defensive alliance between the German Empire and Poland.

From that alliance, however, an accidental advantage accrued to Peter. Berlin and Vienna were suspicious of one another. Friedrich Wilhelm had important interests to guard in Poland and Courland, and was resolved therefore to play a double rôle. Though he had gone over to George he would nevertheless not break with the Tsar, and would indeed co-operate actively with him in the hope of gaining further foothold on the Baltic shores.

The Tsar promised to take his troops from Mecklenburg, but, as usual, showed no alacrity to fulfil the promise. On the other hand, he increased his forces in Poland, over which he soon exercised an almost complete military control. But war did not break out afresh; a new peace conference, destined to prove abortive, was called at Brunswick. At that conference the Emperor flattered himself that he would have the rôle of mediator between the conflicting interests, but in that he was deceived. Russia had been isolated, but was unmanageable.

L.

A PERIOD of comparative inactivity intervened in Peter's life. It was remarked that he was more introspective. Despite his contempt for the Church, he had the services of a father-confessor, and examined his position with regard to the after-life. His health was poor, and although he was not so prone to violent attacks of fever, he seemed always conscious that death threatened him. He was credulous to the point of superstition regarding medicine. It is probable that but for the shame of Alexis he would again have gone to Carlsbad for a cure. But instead he dosed himself with all manner of salts and waters. Though he prided himself on being a man of science, he was not entirely emancipated from Russian medicine-magic, and one reads of him sitting down to pots of live worms and woodlice.

His doctors strongly advised him to give up drinking strong liquor, and intermittently he followed their advice. He would lock the doors on his guests so that they did not escape from his forced debauches, while he went out for a few hours for a rest. But he was a drunkard. He could not escape from his habit. Drink produced a state of mind which to him was very attractive. He sought pretexts for feasts and drinking-bouts, and it could not have been with the ulterior motive of making other people tipsy while he remained sober.

The winter of 1720 was marked by one of his characteristic big affairs. He decided to marry Buturlin,

the Prince-Pope, to the widow of the later Patriarch of Mirth, Zotof. Not many details of this obscene revel have been recorded, but the couple were made very drunk and put to bed inside the 1714 war-memorial, as it were inside a soldier's cenotaph. This was a hollow pyramid. Peep-holes were made in the walls, and Peter with a merry company of chosen courtiers watched the consummation of the marriage through these holes.

The Tsar had gone too far for this to be considered a further affront to the religious Patriarchate. Since the trial of Alexis he had shown himself even more hostile to the Church. Stephen Yavorsky, the Exarch, his substitute for a Patriarch, had been brought to Petersburg, and carried on his duties under surveillance. Practically all his power was taken away from him. Bishops, priests, monks, were flogged at the order of the civil power. The knout instead of the Cross ruled the Church. The Tsar showed great malice against the " long-beards," with their visions and prophecies. The idea of a new code of ecclesiastical statutes and the formation of a Court or Synod to control the Church was in the air. Theophan Prokopovitch, a learned divine of Western tastes, became a chief instrument for the reform of the Church. Theophan was a matter-of-fact realist with a satirical turn of mind, sharing none of the common superstitions of the Russian clergy and peasant mass. In 1719 and 1720 he published, at Peter's inspiration, a new series of regulations of ecclesiastical procedure and behaviour, and he undoubtedly prepared the way for the establishment of the Holy Synod. But while control of bishops and priests, seminaries, monastic revenues and ecclesiastical sinecures was possible, there was no possible control of custom, tradition, and legend. Nothing could

stop the legend that Russia was governed by the Tsar-Antichrist. The only corrective to that was the legend of the carpenter-Tsar, the working-man sovereign. But Peter's practical conceptions of Government did not extend to any effort to gain material co-operation through good-will. He did not ask: he imposed. He did not cut down his atheistic shows and debauches, his Bacchic orgies, which undoubtedly confirmed the belief that he was the devil. Thus in his later years only those obeyed him who feared him, and only those called him great whom he had debauched.

Although Russia's European tangle was not simplified till the signing of the Peace of Nystadt in 1721, the country did enjoy virtual peace from 1718. Peter had yearned to be quit of the war in order that he might devote his energies to domestic affairs. It is therefore sometimes assumed that the great period of reform corresponds to the last seven years of his life. But in fact Peter's revolution dates earlier. War and the influence of travel provided driving power for his mind and will. The organisation of a large effective army, the construction of the fleet, the building of the new capital, the suppression of the Patriarchate, the institution of the Senate, the decentralisation of Government in provinces—all these relate to the earlier period. To finance war and to bribe foreign politicians and to provide dowries for international marriages he was forced to develop the fiscal system, and to make his taxable subjects rich enough he had to encourage trade. To organise weapon factories, to improve his artillery, to build better ships, to shape Petersburg on Western lines, he was obliged to attract foreign craftsmen and artisans and to set up technical schools and workshops for the education of Russian workers. Had he died in 1718

his tremendous life-work would not have been without vast influence upon the Russian people. Had even Alexis survived him and come to the throne the effects of his great changes could not have been frustrated.

But, naturally, great changes bring great confusion. It is more easy to make revolution by ukase than to make the necessary consequent adjustments. When the Alexis trial was over and Peter had leisure to sit down and face the new Russia he had made, he was confronted by an imbroglio. It needed a genius of a different type to cope with it. His wish for the brains of Richelieu may have been sincere, for he needed them. Disobedience, corruption, evasion, peculation, grew apace, not checked, but increased by the knout. The Senate appeared to be as impotent as the Tsar to cope with it. Like all such bodies, especially in Slavic communities, it loved speech-making, intrigue, quarrels, scenes, fighting with fists. And its members were very venal. Peter, almost in a fit of neurasthenia, bade them cut their speeches, avoid shouting, adjourn for reflection, and in case of serious measures evoking disagreement write their opinion individually and present it for consideration.

To cope with internal disorder he enlarged the functions of the provincial Governors, giving them magisterial powers. He increased the freedom of the municipalities, but he found that high and low, whoever had power abused it to enrich himself, and the greater punishment a man could inflict the greater the blackmail he extorted. Mal-appropriation began at the top with Menshikof himself, and the Tsar fell upon him and beat him, and would have executed him but for the fact that Catherine protected him.

Residence in Petersburg had a disadvantage for the

Tsar, as it had for his successors. It was not Russia, it was far from the heart of the country, and it was extremely difficult to keep aware of what was being done in the name of Government. When the Senate chose to have a discussion of the nation-wide corruption, Peter, listening, flew into a great fury. He was hearing things he did not know, a few of the things he might have known had he lived in Moscow and occupied in administration the time he gave to debauch.

But in 1720 the needs of domestic reform only shared a place in his mind with the external question. The de-coding and answering of letters from his Ministers in Berlin, Vienna, Copenhagen, Paris, London, and elsewhere needed an expert Minister of Foreign Affairs with a trained staff. The Tsar dealt with the mass of correspondence in the same individual way he had dealt with the letters of Alexis. For this, although he allowed himself to be isolated to an extraordinary extent, he proved himself very capable. He was able to control the brains and wits of Tolstoy, Golovkin, Yagushinsky, and the rest. He knew how to play chess with Europe as his board. It is possible that in this preoccupation he took intellectual refuge from the necessities of the Russia he had reformed.

LI

Friedrich Wilhelm could not be restrained, but signed a separate peace with Sweden, receiving in consideration of a certain sum the city of Stettin and the adjacent territory. He refused, however, to enter a military alliance with Sweden against Russia. Denmark, in June of the same year, also made separate peace, giving back to Sweden all her conquests in Norway and Pomerania in return for an indemnity. Schleswig remained Danish under an Anglo-French guarantee.

The policy of George the First had up to this point proved successful. His task now was to force upon Russia an unprofitable peace. Herein he failed, because his show of power was largely bluff. He had not the necessary backing in the English Parliament; four-fifths of whose numbers were in favour of a pacific compromise. Also, although Russia was isolated, it did not prove possible to obtain European allies against her. Holland had been talked out of her offence by the expulsion of De Bie from Petersburg, and was greatly mollified by the lifting of the embargo on Dutch trade in the Baltic. Thanks to the capable work of the Russian Minister, Kurakin, she resolved to keep out of the general intrigue. Prussia, though she had signed a separate peace, professed to favour the Tsar's claims in the north and would not countenance the English proposals.

Admiral Norris was despatched to the Baltic in the

spring of 1720, having at his command a number of war-vessels with which he was ordered to defend the coasts of Sweden and English vessels plying to Sweden. Stanhope called upon the Russian Minister in London and showed him a copy of the Anglo-Swedish Treaty, pointing out that the fleet was being sent only in fulfilment of the terms for the protection of Sweden. "It will be seen by the conduct of the Russians whether you wish peace or not, and whether you are to be considered friends or enemies. As you behave to us so shall we behave towards you."

Norris, when he arrived in northern waters, declared his object to be to obtain a just and liberal peace through the arbitration of His Majesty King George the First. In answer, the Russian admiral Apraxin, acting on Peter's instructions, replied that if His Majesty wished to commence negotiations, let him, according to usage, send an accredited Minister, or even Norris himself properly accredited, when he would be received in all friendliness by the Tsar and proceed to argument.

To prove that they were not afraid of Norris and his squadron, the Russians made another descent upon Swedish shores, and a marauding expedition was successful in burning two towns, forty-one villages, and a great number of farms. This caused considerable laughter in the Opposition in Parliament at the expense of Norris, Stanhope, and the whole Hanoverian intrigue to embroil England and Russia. George the First had a manifest set-back.

Meanwhile there had been a royal change in Stockholm, Frederick the First, the consort of Ulrica, becoming sovereign in her place, and he was more disposed to seek a settlement.[1] At the end of July

[1] July.

Prince Michael Golitsin destroyed part of the Swedish fleet, but the Swedes viewed the loss with equanimity. When next month Rumiantsef was sent to Stockholm to congratulate the new King on his accession he was received with warm welcome. Frederick expressed a wish to come to terms with Russia at the earliest possible moment, and he suggested the calling of a peace conference in some town in Finland, preferably Abo.

Rumiantsef returned with the good news to Petersburg. There was some interchange of correspondence, and the town of Nystadt, north of Abo, on the Gulf of Bothnia, was chosen as seat for the deliberations.

The same Bruce and Osterman were sent to treat on behalf of Russia. Osterman begged to be made Baron, that he might have more weight.[1] As Baron Osterman and Privy Councillor, he went to Nystadt. France offered her good offices as mediator, and having fully obtained the Tsar's views, Campredon, the French Minister at Petersburg, set off to communicate them to Frederick the First.

The Swedish emissaries at Nystadt, Lilienstet and Stremveldt proved very talkative, and it seemed at one time as if the Aland Conference would be repeated. Possibly Sweden still relied on some belated assurance of George. The English King resented the interference of the Regent, Philip of Orleans. It was pointed out that the Tsar was strong enough to wage war alone without allies, and that England could not afford Sweden real protection. Once more the English fleet sailed into the Baltic, and to demonstrate its impotence the Russians landed five thousand men in Sweden, and they did very considerable damage,[2] burning three towns, nineteen parishes, seventy-nine large farms, five hundred and six villages, and four

[1] February. [2] July.

thousand one hundred and fifty-nine peasant farmhouses.

The Swedish delegates became more reasonable, but insisted on retaining Viborg, Petersburg's big buffer. They said they would abandon all Livonia except Pernau and the island of Ezel. They said that they wished the Tsar would send no more expeditions to lay waste their lands. Bruce answered brutally that such expeditions did not hinder their deliberations, but, on the contrary, hastened agreement to the Russian proposals. It was agreed to surrender Livonia to Russia, a douceur being given in the shape of a small secret indemnity.

They still haggled for some weeks over Viborg, and some weeks further over the new frontier line of Russia which should traverse Finland. The Russian delegates did not surrender much of their original claim. Peter and Catherine had sworn to protect the interests of the Duke of Holstein, having in view another dynastic alliance, but the dread of an extended Russian influence was so strong in Europe that Holstein had to be sacrificed to the general interest of peace and settlement. The Tsar also objected to the incorporation of any of the plans of George the First in the treaty, but in that also he compromised a little to gain much more. Bruce and Osterman, backed by Peter, proved very skilful, and came away at last with a settlement which seemed glorious for Russia and yet not too humiliating for Sweden. On the 30th August, at four in the morning, the treaty of peace was signed.

The Tsar, in a state of great excitement, sailed from Petersburg in his Prussian yacht to go to Viborg and meet the document coming to him. On the 3rd September, at Cape Lisy, before getting into Viborg, he met the couriers and received from their hands the

actual parchment. He unsealed the packet and, having glanced at the terms and signatures, became exalted in happiness, and there and then gave thanks to God.

The treaty proclaimed "eternal, sincere, and uninterrupted peace." It granted to the Tsar and his descendants "complete, unchallengeable, eternal possession" of Livonia, Esthonia, Ingria, and part of Karelia with Viborg, to be united for all time with the Russian State. The Swedes retained the right to purchase fifty thousand roubles worth of grain annually in Riga, Revel, or Arensburg, tax free, unless famine prevented export. The Tsar guaranteed to the inhabitants of the ceded provinces freedom of conscience and non-interference with their Evangelical churches and schools. Swedish law to remain in force there. Confiscated property in Livonia, Esthonia, Ezel, Narva, and Viborg was to be returned to the original owners. Presumably Ingria was omitted because Petersburg was partly founded on expropriated soil. All property-owners thus reinstated were obliged to take oath of allegiance to the Tsar, or, if they did not wish to do that, they might sell within three years. All prisoners in Russia except those who wished to join the Greek faith and become naturalised were to be returned to Sweden. All Western Finland was returned to the Swedish King, and the Tsar agreed to pay two million thalers in consideration of the other territorial cessions. The peace treaty was to be understood as a settlement also with the King and Parliament of Poland. The King of Sweden vouched also for the acceptance of the King of Great Britain: that was all that George the First got out of it.

The importance of this settlement was not exaggerated. The great territorial expansion definitely

made Russia a Western Power. The gain was more economic than cultural. These territories remained foreign territories with populations largely Protestant. They were never completely Russianised. A word may not come amiss as to the fate of these conquests. They remained Russian for about two hundred years, but as a result of the Revolution and the German War of 1914–1918, the territory then known as Livonia, with the great port of Riga, became the republic of Latvia; Esthonia, with the ports of Revel and Narva, became the republic of Esthonia. Karelia, with Viborg, became part of the new republic of Finland. Only Ingria—that is, the immediate environs of Petersburg—remained Russian territory. One may smile at the word " eternal " so commonly used in peace treaties of that time.

LII

"We have graduated from our triple-time bitter school," wrote Peter. "All students of science commonly finish in seven years; We have taken three times that amount, but, thank God, our schooling has ended so well, better were impossible." He had as it were received his certificate of proficiency in the University of War. That sombre note was not allowed to rule the mood. Peter was in a frenzy of delight, and in that frenzy he would have everyone share. His yacht became a joy-boat, and he sailed back in triumph and pride to Petersburg, standing on the poop and himself crying, "Peace! Peace!" as he reached the welcoming crowds in the harbour.[1] Guns were fired. The Tsar's trumpeters sounded upon their trumpets. The church bells of the city responded with clangour. The Tsar, leaping and bounding like a boy, went ashore, waving his hands, in which, for once, was no cudgel.

In an open place called the Square of the Trinity barrels of vodka and beer had been assembled and a platform with flags had been raised. Peter, striding through the crowd, which rapidly gave way on each side of him, speedily reached this platform, and, mounting it, took a pitcher of wine with which to drink the people's health:

"Hail, Orthodox people!" cried he. "And thank Almighty God, who has terminated this long war which lasted twenty-one years, and has given us eternal happy peace with Sweden!"

[1] 4th September.

Then fortress cannon rent the air; then infantry in mass formation in the squares of the city fired their carbines to the sky; day fireworks silvered the air; dragoons with white pennants and laurel wreaths rode through the streets. The populace drank free beer. The dwarfs, the fools, and the freaks cut capers everywhere, and some walked on their heads to show their joy. Everyone got drunk, but that was only the beginning of festivity. On the 10th September commenced a Court masquerade of a thousand masks, and this itself lasted a whole week.

The sun shone on the Tsar for the first time since the death of Alexis. He came out of the shadow. He took refuge from all baleful opinions in the blinding brilliance of his triumph. It was indeed a great triumph. But he had the option, to accept it quietly and soberly, or to make the most of it. He chose the latter. The celebration depended upon him. That it was exaggerated into a stupendous national fête and thanksgiving, derived from his own mind and soul and from no one else's. There was no Alexis to welcome him and arrange the festival as at Moscow after Poltava. Menshikof, Romodanovsky, Buturlin were not capable of that.

It is probable that Peter's mind was not inactive during these great weeks of drunkenness, gun-fire, and bell-ringing. Something more could be made out of the Swedish peace than mere festivity, which is soon forgotten. Six weeks later there was a new development. The Senate had decided to ask him to accept the appellatives "Great" and "Father of his People" and the rank and style of Emperor.[1] If this purpose was conceived by any other mind but that of Peter himself, it is not recorded.

One of Peter's favourite heroes was Alexander of

[1] 18th October.

Macedon, who with Charlemagne shares the honour of being called "the Great," and the honour must have been peculiarly acceptable to the Tsar, because he liked to think of himself as another Alexander. But the addition "Father of his People" made him even more illustrious than Alexander.

The function of offering him these titles must certainly have been agreed upon beforehand. The 20th October was the chosen day. As a preliminary, in the morning of that day a general amnesty was pronounced. All condemned men, prisoners, and captives were accorded a free pardon in memory of the signing of peace, a remarkable act of grace which ought nevertheless to have been performed six weeks earlier, when the actual tidings came.

On the afternoon of the 20th October the Senate proposed to him his new and abiding title in history. It had previously been suggested that he should be called "Emperor of the East," but Peter considered that title "mouldy," and substituted "All-Russian Emperor," or, as it is commonly translated, Emperor of all the Russias.

Two days later, in the Cathedral of the Trinity, the new dictator of the Orthodox Church, Theophan Prokopovitch, told the story of the Tsar's life and described his worthiness to be called Father of the Fatherland, Emperor, and Great. And after the sermon, several senators, led by the Chancellor Golovkin, approached Peter and hailed him by these titles again, while the congregation cheered and the bells clashed in the belfry tower.[1]

At the signal of the bell-ringing, gunners waiting fired their guns, hundreds of drummers beat upon their drums, and there was a universal hubbub, in the midst of which Peter, answering the Senators,

[1] 22nd October.

Peter the Great, Father of the Fatherland, Emperor of all the Russians

By Zubof

modestly ascribed his success to the help of God and recommended everyone, while with all their strength thanking God, not to rely on peace or relax their military efforts, otherwise the same fate might overtake Russia as overtook the Empire of the Greeks.

It was not a very gracious reply. The reference to the aid of the Almighty seems purely formal. Peter believed that he merited his glory. The young Peter who romantically preferred to walk disguised in humble rank while another took the praise had disappeared. He now took pleasure in being Emperor, and instructed his Ministers in all foreign Courts to obtain recognition of the title. He had particular zest in asking Lanchinsky, his envoy at Vienna, to inform the Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire. Charles the Sixth, whose policy had been frustrated, was in no humour to welcome the appearance of a rival Emperor in Europe. When Lanchinsky told him in audience, after three ordinary bows, the Emperor merely mumbled something inaudibly. Neither he nor George the First of England ever recognised the title.

Augustus also felt chagrined by the peace, and jealous of Peter. The Poles did not recognise the new title. An unfounded story was put about by an inventive Jew named Leman that the partition of Poland was imminent. He came to Friedrich Wilhelm, pretending he was sent with a plan of partition from Augustus, and went to Augustus pretending he had come with the same plan from Friedrich Wilhelm. When arrested and asked to explain his imposture, he said that the Lord God had inspired him to try to punish the Poles, being the worst people on earth. Apparently some merchants owed him some money. It is almost surprising that Poland escaped partition at the same time that the Swedish possessions were

distributed. The Polish Parliament had good cause to regard Peter as its enemy, and to take no pleasure in his northern triumph or resultant glory.

Prussia and Holland, however, sincerely rejoiced, and at once recognised the new Emperor. As the successors to Peter on the Russian throne did not renounce the exalted title, it became necessary during the century for all Powers to accept it.

LIII

While the year 1721 is memorable for the Peace of Nystadt, it is as memorable for the establishment of the Holy Synod. That was an act the consequences of which to the State were as important as the Reformation to the States of the West. For up to the reign of Peter the rule of Russia had had a theocratic aspect. The word of the Patriarch was equal to the word of the Tsar. The Romanof dynasty itself was derived from the Patriarch Philaret. And the authority of the Church in a country of immense piety was naturally overwhelming. Peter from the first had sensed the difficulty of sharing counsel in his far-reaching secular plans. The Church was the main bulwark of that national tradition which he intended to change or sweep away. The Church kept the men bearded and in mediæval dress, and it kept the women in Oriental seclusion. It kept the old calendar and the archaic alphabet. It pretended to dispose of men's immortal souls and held promises of divine mercy and forgiveness against worldly punishment and disgrace. It affrighted the secular arm by visions and prophecies. The Patriarch, being nearer to God than the sovereign, was assumed to know more, and to be wiser in judgment. Spiritual power and mystical paradoxes had greater authority than materialism and logic.

Great, however, as the influence and following of the Russian Church have always been, it has never had recourse to arms to defend itself from civil forces

arrayed against it. Its passivity is corroborated by the racial passivity of its communion. It has naturally taken to itself those teachings of the Gospel which enjoin passivity. In that, it is unlike Romanism and Cromwellian Protestantism. No Holy War, no "crowning mercies" are possible in Russia.

It would, however, be an error to assume that Orthodoxy was Tolstoyan. It has this difference: it believes in miracles, in Divine interposition, in the intercessions of the angels, and in the power of prayer. And at all these things the new Tsar scoffed. God had no power without the backing of an army or a fleet, and the angels could deliver no man from the torture-chamber and the knout. The Tsar, despite his many-sidedness, was not of a reflective, philosophic, or religious mind. In a civilised debate on the merits of an idea he was helpless. Will, power, action, came to his aid to solve all problems. He had no intellectual outlook. He accepted his Divine right as Tsar because such a Divine right was useful, and pleased him. He overlooked the Divine right of the Patriarch because it was a hindrance. It suited him to be the person nearest to God, and to assume his will must be God's will, his victories God's victories. His conscience raised no obstacle to his becoming the head of the Church.

The idea of a Synod was taken from the West, from the Protestant Churches. The original conception of ecclesiastical autonomy was not Peter's, but Prokopovitch's. In practice the Synod was no Congregational Union. It was rather an ecclesiastical Governmental Committee, formed like the Senate, not to find out the will of the nation and do that, but to do the Tsar's will.

When the Synod was established there had been no Patriarch in Russia for a period of twenty-one years.

Stephen Yavorsky had acted as deputy-Patriarch most of the time. Peter had found himself strong enough to allow the Patriarchate to lapse. But had he died before the Synod came into existence there is little doubt that the Patriarchate would have been re-established. Had Alexis come to the throne there would certainly have been a Patriarch. It is therefore probable that one motive responsible for the formation of the Synod was the wish on Peter's part to make it difficult for his successor to undo his ecclesiastical reform.

"The Most Holy Ruling Synod" was opened in state on the 14th February, 1721. Its nominal president was Stephen Yavorsky; its ruling spirit was Theophan Prokopovitch. Its first procurator was a Colonel. It had at that time eleven members: its president, Yavorsky, its vice-presidents, Prokopovitch and Theodosy Yanovsky, four counsellors who were the four archimandrites of the principal monasteries, and four assessors. The enormous and very precious Patriarchal library was given to the Synod, though for the time being most of the books and manuscripts remained at Moscow. The Synod met at Petersburg, not at Moscow, and had its premises there.

One of its first acts was to have substituted its own name of the Most Holy Synod for the name of the Patriarch in the liturgies of the Church.

The Tsar then, on the advice of Prokopovitch, wrote in defence of the innovation to the Patriarch of Constantinople, and appeared capable of defending it scripturally in adequate fashion. The Synod was recognised by the Patriarch of Constantinople and the other Patriarchs of the Eastern Church.[1]

The authority of the Synod in spiritual matters was supposed to equal that of the Senate in secular

[1] April.

matters. Its word was law unless countermanded by the Tsar. But, also like the Senate, it was appointed, not elected or chosen; it was a delegation of authority by the Tsar.

Like most of the other reforms of Peter, it lasted about two hundred years. It was never a popular body, either with the laity or the clergy, and even achieved eventually a serious unpopularity under the administration of its cleverest procurator, Pobiedonostef. The Patriarchate was revived during the first revolution of 1917, and fell once more into abeyance under Soviet rule a few years later.

In the new ecclesiastical régime which commenced in 1721, Theophan was the Tsar's chief favourite and spiritual adviser. Yavorsky died in 1722, but he had had little significance in the Church or State since the trial of Alexis. No new President was named to take the place of Yavorsky. Theodosy assumed the function, but soon incurred the Tsar's wrath and was banished to a distant monastery. Theophan was a clever time-server, who on all occasions justified before God and man the deeds and character of Peter. If the Tsar needed spiritual assurance he certainly obtained it from him, and it may have been of no small comfort to hear such a learned and intelligent priest declare perpetually he was God's elect and could do no wrong.

Peter's chief hobby between the time of the foundation of the Synod and May, 1722, when he set off to make war on Persia, was ecclesiastical law and religious affairs. He endeavoured by the aid of his new authority to expedite divorce, for he was aware of the fact that the Church as a whole still considered him married to Eudoxia. He was prudent enough not to raise the question as to whether the Church recognised him as divorced from her. Divorce is,

and was repellent to the Orthodox mind. On the 12th April a new marriage law was introduced. Parents were obliged to take an oath before the wedding of children that the children themselves consented to the union, a very important provision in the emancipation of Russian women. The building of new churches was limited to popular requirements. Redundant gravestones were ordered to be used for the repairing of monastery walls. Steps were taken to protect the Orthodox from Roman persecution in Poland. The salaries of the members of the Synod were drawn for the most part out of fines of unbelievers and sectarians. The Old Believers received further attention. In addition to their long beards and compulsory old-fashioned attire, they were now obliged to wear red visors.[1] The Tsar agreed to this. As there were a million or so Old Believers in the country, these visors must have added some colour and absurdity to Russia.

A curious document dating to this period of Peter's life has been preserved. It is his annotation of the Ten Commandments. The sin which he most readily recognised he condemned by the Russian word *Khanzhestvo*, which means sanctimoniousness or hypocrisy. He used also the commoner word for hypocrisy —*litsemerie*, which means literally face-measuring. There must have been many face-measurers at his Court, and he must have been aware of it. But the hypocrisy that he saw was not exactly hypocrisy as we understand it, not Pecksniffian hypocrisy. It was one of the chief charges against Alexis. Apparently in him it connoted religiosity. Bigotry must be insincere.

In any case, he appears to have revised the Ten Commandments for the benefit of the Synod, and to

[1] April.

have discovered, to his dismay, that there was no monition expressly directed against hypocrisy or sanctimoniousness. Something of the *naïveté* and self-conscious omniscience of the Tsar is expressed thus:—

Commandment.	*Infringement.*
1. I am the Lord thy God. Thou shalt have none other gods but Me.	Worship of idols and atheists.
2. Thou shalt not make to thyself any graven image.	Thou who do not possess the fear of God and hold everything lightly, others who do it through lack of knowledge.
3. Thou shalt not take the Name of the Lord in vain.	As in the first, also idle people and scoffers.
4. Honour thy father and thy mother. . . .	The same as in the second and third.
5. Thou shalt not kill.	Robbers and the like.
6. Thou shalt not commit adultery.	Those who do it not having the fear of God, others from necessity, others out of great lust.
7. Thou shalt not steal.	Thieves.
8. Thou shalt keep holy the Sabbath day.	The soulless.
9. Thou shalt not bear false witness. . . .	Slanderers.
10. Thou shalt not covet. . . .	Those who do it.

"Describing all these sins against the commandments I only find one sin omitted, that of hypocrisy and sanctimoniousness. Why is that? It is because this sin is included in each of the above written commandments and sins. The sin against the first is atheism, which in hypocrites is the foundation, for the first thing they do is to talk of visions, and mandates from God, and invented miracles, and while they themselves invent them they know that not God has performed them but they themselves. . . . Against

the second are those who have no fear of God, for when they lie about God what fear of God can one find in them? The third is like the second, to which one can add the would-be saints. Can the prayer of hypocrites filled with lying wonders, and Phariseeism and atheism be pleasing to God? There are some who keep the fourth in a random manner, honouring their fathers, but do they likewise honour their pastors, their second fathers sent from God? Their chief accomplishment is to deceive their pastors to the uttermost; greatly do they strive to bring calamity upon them, traducing their superiors and disseminating libels among the people and inciting to revolt, as many heads on poles testify.

Against the fifth; those who go about the world in the guise of holiness, disguised as lambs, wearing its skin are just as bad as robbers and insurrectionaries.

Against the sixth: how can a husband allow an unknown man in to his wife, especially a fine vigorous one, and then take the hypocrite's arm, ask his blessing, ask him to prophecy, and then see him out of the house, kissing his hand and bowing and thinking oneself very virtuous, having nevertheless entertained a child of hell?

Touching the seventh, one can steal with the spirit as well as with the hands, and sometimes with both. The eighth is like the rest. The ninth and tenth refer to those who help themselves without scruple. An ikon is found somewhere in the woods, or a man has a vision bidding him build a monastery there or in some wilderness, but that is a pretext—a monastery without a village is impossible. Just as recently at Preobrazhenskoe two peasants came and told of a

vision of a monastery that must be built and asking the landowner to give up a village for it.

And so this sin of hypocrisy holds everything in it. Not every one is capable of the other sins. For instance, if a robber plays the hypocrite and wants to enter a workshop, who will take him? When a drunkard comes into a tavern looking like a saint and will neither drink nor play, everyone will shun him; or if a young lover of Venus comes into the company of girls looking sanctimonious, no one would make friends with him. He would not find companions because they would expect him to lead them into temptation.

Finally, Christ the Saviour did not order His apostles to be afraid of anything, but he warned them strongly: Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy." [1]

The Tsar had evidently just discovered the Commandments, and as father of his people and supreme schoolmaster, dreamed of re-writing them. Some of them must have been rather distasteful if he began to use them as a criterion of self-examination. The illiterate farrago that he wrote shows the difficulty he experienced in dealing with ideas and abstractions. He strains the significance of each commandment to imply hypocrisy, but impales himself on his own argument, evading the real significance of " Thou shalt not kill " and " Thou shalt not commit adultery."

[1] The order of the commandments in this commentary is, of course, incorrect, but it follows the Russian original.

LIV

Apart from ecclesiastical affairs the Tsar's mind was occupied with other matters. The first was the unsettled question of the succession to the throne. The second was a military preparation for a campaign on the shores of the Caspian Sea.

Peter was not disposed to consider the child of Alexis as heir, but since the death of Peter Petrovitch, Catherine had no son. The Tsar, though enjoying fair health, evidently saw the shadow of death on his horizon. He frequently called himself "old man," though he was only forty-nine. In December 1721 he called upon both the Synod and the Senate to recognise Catherine as Empress in her own right, and he was toying with the idea of nominating her as his sole successor. Foreign observers, however, remarked that Catherine had now a rival in Peter's affections in the person of the daughter of Cantemir, that unfortunate Hospodar whom Peter had attached to his own service after the failure of the campaign on the Pruth. Among Peter's many mistresses of a night, or a week, or a month, Mary Cantemir happened at a psychological moment. It is said that he hoped to beget male issue by her. Certainly Catherine and Menshikof were apprehensive that in such a case the Empress might be set aside, or even fall completely into disfavour. The Tsar could not be parted from her, and though pregnant she accompanied him on the Caspian campaign.

For Peter went to war again. All the winter of

1721–1722 preparations for war continued. The geographical scheme of the new Russia must be fulfilled. The Tsar did not propose to renew the struggle with Turkey, but he thought his hold on the Baltic should be balanced by a hold on the Caspian, which was then, from the trading point of view, much more important than it is now. He contemplated a water-way to join the Caspian and the Black Sea. The Caspian ports were actually or potentially emporiums of goods designed for India and southern central Asia, and the caravan routes before the time of steamships and railroads had naturally great possibilities of development. If Russia could gain control of them she could graft very handsomely on the trade of Asia.

A further lure lay in tales of gold resident in the sands of the Oxus River, in the reputed wealth of the Khans, and in the potentialities of the southern regions for sugar-planting. Possibly also the new Emperor of Russia wished to make a career in Asia comparable to that of other emperors, of Tamerlane and Alexander. It is certain that for a while Peter nursed a grandiose scheme of conquest and intended to proceed not only against Caucasian chiefs and Persia, but also against the Khans of Khiva and Bokhara. His campaign was abortive; he only captured Derbent, but it was a prophetic gesture in history. All that he designed to take his successors did eventually take. Therein lies doubtless some of the real greatness of Peter; he divined a large part of Russian destiny. And in the Russian national consciousness the dream of India became second only to the dream of Constantinople.

For years previous to the signing of the Peace of Nystadt Peter had been sending out small armies and detachments of engineers and prospectors. His

spies and cartographers had supplied him with excellent material. But he had had little military success. He was always indisposed to fight two wars at the same time, and as long as the issue with Sweden was undecided he avoided the division of his military forces. His largest adventure came to grief. In 1719 he sent Prince Alexander Cherkassky to Khiva with an armed mission. He was a Central Asian specialist and had made several valuable reports on the Khivan and Persian situations. The Khivans estimated the numbers of his army at eight thousand men. It is not surprising that they refused to regard him as a peaceful emissary. He came with the air of an invader, built a city within the Khivan domain, and proceeded to form a base for operations. The Khan therefore attacked him suddenly. He was himself killed in action and his army routed.

The Khivans thereupon, apprehensive of the wrath of the Tsar, sent an envoy to explain. In 1721 this turbaned gentleman arrived in Petersburg, and was at once arraigned before a committee of the Senate, who asked him to explain the "murder" of the Russian "ambassador." On giving his naïve explanation that Cherkassky had behaved like an enemy, the Senators laughed. "Your Khan must have been angry with you," said they, "and has sent you here to be punished." Whereupon they had him confined in a cell in the fortress. What was inflicted on him there is not recorded, but within a month he was dead.

That was thought only an instalment of the whole punishment of Khiva. But in the event the Tsar's desire for vengeance proved impotent. For his army never approached the territory of Khiva.

In 1722 the power of the Shah of Persia suffered partial eclipse. The Afghans, under Mahmoud, cap-

some small affrays in which the Russians were successful. But there was now no question of Khiva, Bokhara, Askhabad. The provisioning had failed. The flour barges, overloaded and unseaworthy, gave their contents to the Caspian. Forage was scarce. Thousands of horses perished. There was great confusion in the army, and Peter stepped out of the confusion betimes.

The foundations were laid of the Holy Cross fort at the mouth of the Agrahan, and, leaving a garrison, Peter returned to Astrakhan.

There he celebrated victory and suffered a disappointment.[1] Mary Cantemir had not fared well in childbed. There had been a miscarriage. Her significance for Peter ceased with that misfortune. His reflections are not recorded, but the failure must have put him out of heart. He immediately quit the Persian scene. Three days after his arrival in Astrakhan he set off for Moscow.

[1] 4th October.

LV

On the 13th December Peter and Catherine entered Moscow in state, repeating their victory celebrations with the customary fanfare of drums, processions, salutes, fireworks, and feasting. From Moscow the joy-making was removed to Preobrazhenskoe, scene of all his childhood's games. He caused the little house which he had built with his own hands to be replaced on its old foundations. It had been removed some years back, and would have been preserved as an historical relic. But Peter had a whim. He would now set fire to his own house with his own hands and have one of his characteristic Bacchic orgies round the flames.

So the house was replaced, and he crowded every ledge inside and out with Roman candles.[1] He fired them with his own hands, and, having set the house alight, marched round it beating a drum while it blazed—the fifty-year-old Peter, the "old man," with bloated cheeks and sunken eyes.

He told the Duke of Holstein that he burned the house in token that his life-work was accomplished: the destruction of the Swedish power, as he had planned it there. But if this was a celebration of the Peace of Nystadt it was belated. It was also hardly relevant to the Persian campaign. It must have been a continuation of his birthday festivity so inadequately rendered on the 30th May in Nizhni Novgorod. Was it not also part expression of his despair at not having a young Peter to follow him?

[1] 28th January, 1723.

His mind was focussed upon his own past and upon destiny. After the house had been burned he caused the boat in which he had first learned to sail to be transported from the Yauza to the Neva, and its reception in Petersburg was made the occasion for yet another orgy, when Catherine and Peter entertained a large company within locked doors, a ten-hours drinking bout in which everyone, including Emperor and Empress, got very drunk.

The year 1723 was a very lean one in Russia. There was famine, and evidence everywhere of nation-wide poverty. The exchequer was not only empty, but deep in debt. Government employees had not been paid for months. There were large arrears of wages and salaries, and arrears in the payment of treaty obligations. The members of the new Synod were reproved for requiring the fines on the sectarians for their own salaries and told to raise funds from the Church. How dare they take this money when " the poor soldiers of my field army have not been paid for nearly a year " !

The Baltic trade progressed, but Archangel had become dead. Internal domestic trade was bad. The roads were more than ever infested with robbers. For the cities swarmed with a new beggary, and the more stalwart beggars turned naturally to banditry. The new capital still remained a foreign territory. The work supposed to have been carried out on the connecting highways had been badly done, and it still took five weeks to make the journey from Moscow thither.

Measures were taken for bread rationing, but these measures did not apply to the Court, nor did Peter set any example by stinting himself. Nor did the Tsar reflect on the extravagance of the Persian campaign and the set-back to peaceful development

which it entailed. He was never self-critical, never blamed himself for any ill that befel his country. But he was at this time more introspective than he had ever been. It was found difficult to engage his attention either with domestic or foreign affairs. He spent the summer of 1723 sailing about idly on his domestic waters or gardening in his new Petersburg gardens. He drank more than was usual even with him, and for the first time in his reign he might be described as an idle monarch.

He was, however, on very good terms with Catherine. No shadow threatened their understanding. He convinced himself that she was as devoted to his reforms, his new Russia, as she was to him personally. He went over in his mind all that she had been to him, the dangers and triumphs she had shared. If he died he could safely entrust all to her wisdom. That seemed to be the only solution to the succession problem.

In November his reflections found voice in a manifesto in praise of Catherine, indicating his desire to crown her with his own hands . . . " our most dear consort, sovereign Empress Catherine, our great helper, especially in the campaign on the Pruth," and citing historical precedents for his action.

But this manifesto was also a form of hesitation. The autocrat needed no precedents. Nor did the manifesto actually dispose of the succession of Catherine. Nor was it perhaps whole-heartedly sincere. The actual coronation did not take place for another six months. Peter was watching her, watching her adherents to judge how they would behave, as possibly he had watched the behaviour of the adherents of Alexis when he had seemed to be dying.

Or, in anticipation of death, he was balked by

conscience. How meet Alexis in the resurrection, having disinherited his son? This question doubtless troubled Peter little. But even when he did crown Catherine he left the succession somewhat in doubt, and on his death-bed, some months later, he still could not make a clear decision. The shower of death-bed pardons which Peter sent out showed that conscience did trouble him at the last.

On the other hand, he may also have understood that Catherine would prove quite incapable of governing Russia. The throne was not a reward for good behaviour; it was a great responsibility: it called for energy, resolution, wisdom, and clear judgment—especially the throne of this new Russia which he had called into being. It must have been possible to foresee that she would be licentious and idle and dominated by favourites. Moreover, she was of ignoble origin and not Russian. She was no heroine to the nation at large.

At the best, giving her the succession to the throne meant giving it virtually to Menshikof. But the male egoism of Peter forbade such a thought. He chose not to think of her as supported by Menshikof. Instead, he saw his own will posthumously active in Catherine, and that was a fantasy.

The Tsar lacked a right-hand man, an "elder statesman" to whom he could turn for real support and advice. His *parvenu* brood of ministers were neither wise nor high-minded. All were corrupt and mostly self-seeking, intriguing against one another. When tipsy they naturally turned to fisticuffs and low brawling. At the best, in their various aptitudes, they were European mediocrities. There was no human material on which to build with confidence.

Two of the new men came to the foot of the scaffold in 1723 and 1724 respectively, Shafirof and Oster-

man, pursued relentlessly by the Menshikof faction, but the Tsar reprieved them, feeling perhaps that they had been useful men and might later be recalled from exile for further use. His handy men formed part of his bequest to Catherine.

Peter delayed. The most magnificent crown was ordered for the Empress, grander than that worn by Ivan the Terrible. Her coronation robe was ordered in Paris. A gilded carriage was prepared. At last the day came, the 7th May, 1724, and Menshikof's good laundress, the Livonian camp-girl, now for twenty years the consort of the Tsar, knelt in the Cathedral, and would have clutched at the knees of her master and embraced him hysterically while he was putting the splendid crown, with its great ruby, upon her brows.

LVI

Nevertheless, at the same time, Catherine was pursuing an affair. Her lover was William Mons, the brother of the Tsar's first mistress. It is said that Peter must have known, because everyone else knew. But how much did he know? He never grudged Catherine her favourites. A favourite need not be a lover. Did he imagine that the impure Catherine in all those twenty years with him had been steadfastly faithful to him and chaste? That would seem incredible, slight as the Tsar's power of imagination and great as his egoism were. But he believed that to her he was God. He believed in her single-hearted, dog-like devotion. He did not think it possible she could be devoted to any other man as to him. Perhaps in that he was right. But it did not prevent Catherine indulging her fancy in secret.

Suddenly the Tsar was prey to devastating jealousy. William Mons stood in his way. And William Mons was nothing. He was only a man who could suffer and die. But because of his intimacy with the Empress scores of people used him as their intermediary. He told Catherine what was wanted. She told Menshikof. If the Tsar's action were required, she, more than any other, had his ear.

Mons and his sister Matrena (Mme. Balk) were making a fortune in bribes. This in itself was hateful to the Tsar, who was more and more enraged at the unchecked corruption in the State. He must have discovered that Catherine herself shared in the

profits of the business of intercession. For on the day after the execution of Mons her personal fortune was placed under an interdict and sealed to await audit. By imperial ukase all recommendations made in her name were considered worthless unless countersigned by him, and she was debarred from receiving petitions for favour. Thus was she discrowned.

The Tsar had the head of William Mons preserved in spirit, placed in a vase in Catherine's bedroom, a surprise of cold terror when she retired for the night.

He then struck at her through Menshikof, whom he removed from his post as President of the War Department, and he appointed Prince Repnin in his place.

Preparations were being made for a new reign of terror when the Tsar was struck down in his last illness. That he was completely estranged from Catherine goes without saying, but he was frigid, mysterious, and wary. The cat began to play with the mouse which ultimately he would kill. The devil was back in Peter and was casting round for some new staggering picturesque cruelty which would express the soul and the will of the great man who brooks no opposition—he who must be obeyed. Father of his country, schoolmaster, Emperor—*the Great.* "Round he casts his baleful eyes." But there was a recall: death intervened.

The last positive work of Peter the Great is connected with his beloved creation, Petersburg. Something was lacking to make it part of the living Russia. It must be united in spirit to the whole, even if that meant a union with the old Russia and a denial of Peter's Westernism. Even Mahometans at the Holy Sepulchre feel they must have some of the Christians' Holy Fire, and Peter, while not an old-fashioned

believer, felt that his city must enshrine some of the dust of the Saints.

Petersburg was built about the spot where by tradition St. Alexander Nevsky defeated the Swedes on the 15th July, 1541. In memory of this battle the Tsar had caused the Alexander Nevsky Monastery to be built, and he now, in 1724, decided to bring thither the relics of the saint from Valdimir. A commission of spiritual and lay persons was sent with orders to convey the holy relics of Alexander to Petersburg with the same rites as the relics of St. Philip had been conveyed from Solovetsk to Moscow in countries past.

Peter's word was law for the Church. It needed no fiat of a Patriarch. The relics were raised from the Cathedral at Vladimir and carried with holy clamour cross-country to Novgorod, where they were put on the Tsar's yacht and sailed to Lake Ladoga.[1] Peter met them at Ust-Izhora in a rowing-boat. He had the box with its precious remains hoisted from the yacht to the bottom of the boat. The Tsar then seated himself at the helm, and three pairs of rowers manfully plied their oars. Many ships of the Tsar's fleet accompanied. And first to welcome them at the entrance to Petersburg was Peter's little first boat, flying the Imperial standard. The Tsar gave a shoulder to the holy box, which was raised on the backs and hands of all who could get near, and thus it was brought ashore and carried, under a rich canopy, through the immense crowd to the new Church of St. Alexander. Thus Petersburg became St. Petersburg. Thus also it became united in the imperishable substance of the Church to that which has been called before and since—"Holy Russia." That this religious festival was followed by a Bac-

[1] August.

Death Mask of Peter the Great

chanalia in which thousands of bottles of wine were consumed seems less significant.

Chronologically this antedates the Mons affair. The Emperor and Empress were still in accord. Peter's health was bad, but he had thrown physic to the winds. After the Alexander Nevsky orgy he was confined to bed for a week. Historians are inclined to think that he never recovered from this debauch and that the bout which followed it was merely continued in September and continued again in November and December. On the 22nd September he had a terrible fit, but drove his doctors from his house, cudgel in hand. He went to survey the Ladoga Canal in October, but felt weak in body. His chief physician, Blumentrost, counselled rest, but he was possessed by feverish energy and restlessness. He went to the Olonets iron-works and took a hand himself at the furnaces. Thence he went to the salt factory at Staraya Rus. At the beginning of November he commenced his return journey by water, but near Lakhty he saw a boat sailing from Kronstadt go aground in the shallows. He must needs help to right this vessel and, standing up to the waist in water, struggled to save soldiers from drowning and the boat from becoming a complete wreck.

At the time of the Mons discovery he was very unsteady. His dreadful facial contortions occurred more often. On the 14th November Mons was executed. The break with Catherine acted upon his nerves and further increased his feverish state. That did not prevent him, when Buturlin, Prince-Pope of Mirth, died, from repeating the Bacchic rites of the election of a new Patriarch. The New Year brought more drinking bouts. On the Feast of the Epiphany he caught a chill at the blessing of the waters of the Neva. In the evening he went to another orgy—the

wedding of a servant-girl. He promised to go to Riga for the wedding of his daughter Anne to the Duke of Holstein, but then suddenly his strength utterly failed him. He took to bed again. He was in great pain and knew that his end was near.

On the 17th January he had a chapel consecrated just outside his bedroom door, in order that he might feel nearer to God. On the 22nd January he made his final confession and received the Eucharist. For days he was moaning or shrieking with pain. Poison of disease had infected his whole system, as was manifest by the suppuration of open sores at the groins and on the thighs. The bladder was greatly inflamed, causing severe stoppage.

On the 26th January his pains were intensified, and in a frenzy of fear of death he ordered a pardon to all penal convicts not guilty of capital offences. On that day the Holy Oil was brought in and he was anointed for death. Next day he lifted fate from all those lying under sentence of death for military offences excepting incorrigible bandits and murderers. Nobles absconding from Court and avoiding military service were pardoned. About two o'clock in the afternoon he asked for paper, pen, and ink, and with trembling hand wrote the words "*Give back all to . . .*", but could do no more but send for his daughter Anne that she might take down by dictation his last will and testament concerning the succession. By the time she came to his bedside he had fallen into a state of coma. The Guards officers came in one by one to say their last good-bye to the living, a clank of spurs or of heavy boots and a last salute. The chief Senators entered, awkward and abashed, not quite sure what they should do. There must have been, as before when he was thought to be dying, the hideous doubt that he was watching, that he would yet recover.

Catherine wept by the bedside. She was irreproachable there. But she had taken the precaution to surround the Palace with guards. Menshikof and Peter Tolstoy helped her in her dispositions for the eventuality of death. The discipline of the troops had been lightened. Money gifts were promised. Active propaganda in favour of Catherine was made in all ranks. Back pay, long overdue, was suddenly paid up.

For sixteen hours, with palsied face and bloodshot, staring eyes, the giant Tsar lay breathing out his life. Priests never ceased to pray. The lights of the ikon lamps dreamed in the room. But elsewhere in the Palace senators and high dignitaries disputed the question of the succession, unaware that they were really in a state of siege and that in the last event they had no other course but to accept the Empress Catherine as sovereign. Repnin, who, by order of the Tsar, had but lately displaced Menshikof, asked who had dared assemble the troops without his orders. He was told that the orders were those of the Empress, whom everyone must now obey. Menshikof could afford to smile at his enemies.

At two in the morning of the 28th January, 1725, the breathing ceased. Peter was dead, and Catherine closed his eyes.

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